# From Curriculum Reform to Classroom Practice: Intentions, Perceptions, and Actual Implementation in English Secondary Schools in Libya

**Tarig Abdulatif Saleh Omar**

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**School of Education**
**College of Social Sciences**
**University of Glasgow**

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# Abstract

In the last decade, curriculum developers have stressed the important role that teachers play in translating educational reforms into classroom practice. In Libya, the English language curriculum reform of 2000, which reflects a learner-centred philosophy of language teaching and learning, was intended to enable learners to communicate effectively in English. To achieve this goal, the reformers called for a learner-centred approach to learning through the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Cooperative Learning (CL), as both are believed to maximise the learners' exposure to meaningful learning experiences in a democratic and cooperative environment. However, despite its popularity in the field of English language teaching (ELT), there were many issues stemming from the teachers' implementation of CLT.

Working as an English language teacher in a Libyan university raised my awareness of the difficulties associated with recruiting students for the department of English and linguistics. This complex situation sparked my interest in undertaking a research study to investigate the reasons behind this observed lack of English competence among Libyan secondary school graduates. Therefore, using Cultural Historical Activity Theory as a theoretical framework, this research study investigated English language teachers' implementation of the present curriculum, which was introduced two decades ago. This research particularly aims to investigate the extent to which the perceptions of Libyan English language teachers in relation to language teaching and learning in general and in relation to CLT in particular are congruent with the pedagogical changes advocated by Libyan curriculum makers.

To investigate this phenomenon, a qualitative research design was employed as a mode of inquiry. An in-depth examination was conducted with ten secondary-school Libyan English language teachers, who were sampled purposively, in one city in eastern Libya. Complementary data collected through vignettes, initial and follow-up semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations were analysed and synthesised to promote the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. These data, which were analysed thematically, yielded the themes and sub-themes which constitute the results of this research study.

Using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a lens helped to elucidate the very complex issues that secondary-school English language learning and teaching in Libya has been facing in the last 18 years or so. This research contributed by offering the following findings: (a) although teachers in this study reported positive views about CLT in general and learner-centred teaching in particular, inconsistencies between what teachers reported and their practice were also identified. Their practice, influenced by their experiences as language learners at their university, by their school culture, and by their professional context, seemingly remained teacher-centred; (b) this observed inconsistency has a huge impact not only on their overall practice (e.g. CL was almost non-existent in their practice and very few attempts were made to conduct pair or group work activities), but, more importantly, on the quality of Libyan students' English language experiences; (c) these findings are interconnected with the teaching preparation and professional support that secondary-school Libyan English language teachers were offered at their university; (d) the findings also suggested that the Libyan school culture, in general, tended to be incompatible with the current English curriculum principles and intentions; and (e) English language teachers were isolated as they were the only Libyan teachers required to implement the English language curriculum reform. A different approach to learning was employed in other curricular areas, especially Arabic language learning, where teachers were not subject to these curricular reforms or expected to utilise a new pedagogical approach. Overall, these research findings offer a more comprehensive overview of this nationwide problem in order to elucidate the issues, encourage a joined-up approach to tackling them, and make recommendations to different stakeholders in order to seek potential ways forward, with a view to resolving the situation.

Important points for consideration are presented that are likely to improve the implementation of the present English language curriculum, the most important of which are the need to (a) adjust the university English curriculum as well as the teaching approach to be in harmony with the professional context and culture of Libyan schools; (b) establish more coordination and communication between teacher training programmes, schools, and curriculum designers; and (c) conduct further research to extend the findings and contributions of this research.

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# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| C.E.R.C | Curricular and Educational Research Centre in Libya |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| CLT | Communicative Language Teaching |
| M.o.E. | Ministry of Education |
| C.E.R.C | Curricular and Educational Research Centre |
| EfL | English for Libya |
| ELT | English Language Teaching |
| TESOL | Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages |
| LBoE | Local Bureau of Education |
| CHAT | Cultural-Historical Activity Theory |
| LBoE | Local Bureau of Education |
| LTE | Language Teacher Education |
| PD | Professional Development |

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# Chapter 1: The Research Context

## 1.1 Introduction

In 2000, Libya's education authority made significant changes to most school curricula, including English, using a top-down approach to curriculum reform which adopted new theories and approaches to language teaching and learning. The result was the introduction of a new English curriculum in Libyan preparatory and secondary schools, followed by further changes to primary school curricula in 2007. The 2000 curriculum included new approaches to language teaching and learning such as communicative language teaching (CLT) and cooperative learning (CL). The development of the present English language curriculum was an important step taken by the Libyan educational authority towards achieving better language teaching and learning, required to keep pace with the rapid economic change and the need for English as a means of international communication. The curriculum, which was published between 2000 and 2007, was presented in the form of textbooks. The series, titled *English for Libya*", was mainly developed in the United Kingdom by Garnet Publishing in agreement with the Curricular and Educational Research Centre in Libya (CERC)—the education body which belongs to Libya's Ministry of Education. Compared with the previous English curriculum, the reformed English curriculum represented a remarkable shift by introducing modern teaching methodologies and curriculum materials, as well as implementing contemporary theories of language teaching and learning.

The CERC did not merely introduce the English curriculum to share the curriculum principles with teachers, but also required teachers to adopt and implement these principles by both changing what they do in relation to language teaching and how they think and believe about teaching. However, despite the introduction of the new curriculum in 2000, teachers' actual classroom practices today still tend to be incongruent with the principles and goals of the curriculum (Orafi and Borg, 2009). In other words, their classroom practices seem to remain traditional—teacher-centred—whereby teachers control the learning process of their students. The teachers seem to place more trust in the traditional ways of teaching to which they had grown accustomed before being introduced to the present English language curriculum. This trust in previous teaching behaviours has led to incongruences between the overall aims and objectives of the 2000 curriculum in terms of the use of CLT and English teachers' pedagogical practices. For example, while grammar within CLT is taught implicitly,

teachers in Libya still use a traditional approach to teach English grammar, presenting explicit grammatical rules with many examples written on the board (Yousaf et al., 2017). Such incongruences can be attributed to various factors, including teachers' conflicting views about the whole educational process, particularly their views about student-centred pedagogy (Aloreibi and Carey, 2017). Such beliefs may subsequently affect teachers' implementation of the recent English curriculum.

In order to implement the new curriculum, Libya's Ministry of Education (M.o.E) employed the cascade model of staff development. Such a top-down approach to introducing the innovation meant that there was less opportunity for English language teachers to engage in planning and designing the innovation. Instead, they were simply required to adopt and implement this curriculum passed down to them by curriculum planners and educational authorities. Global research suggests that the cascade model is often employed for introducing curriculum reforms (Talukder, 2014, Karalis, 2016). However, this approach has also been criticised from different angles. Section 3.9.4 will discuss in more detail the usefulness and the drawbacks of the model for introducing educational innovations.

Considering the fact that the old English language curriculum had been followed by teachers for many years (from 1986 to 2000), such an innovation arguably required greater introductory and educational support to encourage teachers to adopt it. However, Libyan English language teachers were typically given only a one-week training course led by trained language inspectors in the belief that this would provide sufficient support to teachers in implementing and delivering the curriculum (Orafi, 2008).

A few research studies have analysed whether teachers are actually applying what they learned from the one-week training programme (e.g. Orafi, 2008). Moreover, there may still be unarticulated reasons why Libyan teachers do not implement the recent English curriculum as intended. The primary focus of this research is on the changes to the English language curriculum. The major problem with the present English language curriculum is that English language teachers in Libya have experienced difficulties in implementing it effectively for almost 20 years now. The first major implications are related to the current difficulties in English language teaching and learning which remain unresolved. This has great implications for the students entering higher education, particularly those joining the department of English language. As a university English language teacher myself, I have noticed serious language issues faced by almost all first-year students which can represent, in

my opinion, a great barrier to their moving on to the second year of the programme. Moreover, it is a great challenge for us (university teachers) to deal with and to teach advanced materials to students who lack the essential language requirements, such as a good writing and reading ability and a knowledge of correct spelling. At our universities, a significant number of complaints have been made regarding this issue, which suggests that something should be done to fix English language education in schools so that new university students can start and successfully complete their higher education language studies. The issues we (university teachers) are encountering in relation to the new students entering higher education language programmes originate from the poor implementation of the present English language curriculum in schools. Therefore, this research will attempt to investigate the issues around the poor implementation of the curriculum. It will investigate the reasons, if any, that may have inhibited teachers from adopting the reformed English language curriculum. This research will further explore how teachers' educational beliefs and other contextual realities which have not yet been reported by other studies influence teachers' educational behaviour in relation to teaching the present English language curriculum. By doing so, we may be able to understand what actually happens in teachers' classrooms in relation to the implementation of the recent English language curriculum and why first-year university students are struggling with their language education. By providing an in-depth understanding of the issue of language education in schools, this research can offer solutions to the problems in the hope that these solutions will have a positive impact on students joining higher education language programmes in Libyan universities, especially in English language departments.

It is intended that this research will add new insights into teachers' professional development and education, socio-cultural realities, the dissemination process of the English language curriculum reform, teachers' understandings of the reform and the challenges it has brought, and teachers' re-conceptions of their roles in the ongoing development of this curriculum. These insights might help us find an effective strategy for successfully implementing the curriculum to help advance English language education, not only to ensure effective language learning in schools, but also, as mentioned earlier, for the benefit of students studying languages at higher education.

This research will seriously consider the complexities of the Libyan context – starting from how English teachers have been educated, their educational perspectives, the reform's impact on the English language subject alone (other school subjects remained untouched), Libya's

historical contexts, and other societal influences – as these all seem to contribute to shaping the general pedagogical practices of secondary school English language teachers in Libya.

The next section will discuss the context of the research in more depth and also comment on the research rationale. Finally, it will outline the contents and organisation of this thesis.

## 1.2 Libya

In this section, I discuss the country's educational system. This includes Libya's educational culture and its history of English language teaching. I will also look at the circumstances that necessitated the introduction of the present English language curriculum in 2000. Additionally, I will briefly discuss the principles and organisation of the curriculum and how this curriculum led to a significant shift (in terms of reform, rather than implementation) from teacher-centred to student-centred education. Even though the reform took place nearly two decades ago, its impacts with respect to the challenges it presents for both teachers and students still persist in Libya's English education. This strongly suggests the need to study the phenomenon not only to appreciate the reasons for its impacts, but, more importantly, to help alleviate the situation.

### 1.2.1 Education in Libya: Historical Context

Libya is an Arabic country located in North Africa, sharing borders with Egypt in the east, Tunisia in the west, Algeria in the south-west, Sudan in the north-east, and Niger and Chad in the south. According to UNDESA (2017) (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs), the population of Libya is approximately 6.276 million, the majority of whom inhabit the northern part of the country. Libya is the fourth largest country in Africa with the longest Mediterranean Sea coastline. The country has a large area—seven times the size of the United Kingdom (Worldatlas, 2017, Nationsonline, 2018).

It was not until 1951 that Libya gained its independence after a period of forty years of occupation by the Italian and British powers. The Italian colony was defeated in North Africa in 1942. After the defeat of the Italian power, Libya was under temporary British rule from 1942 to 1951. From 1951 to 1969, the period when the country was under the British monarchy, all Libyans were given the right to education. Schools were established for

different stages, and, in addition to the new schools, old Koranic schools were reopened, which in turn also had a significant influence on Libyan education (Deeb and Deeb, 1982).

Efforts to introduce English language education began in the 1940s, after the end of World War II, and were conducted by the British administration in the northern part of Libya (Mohsen, 2014). From 1940 onwards, many English language programmes have been introduced. In 1940, for example, an English language textbook called *Basic way to English* was introduced. In 1960, a new series of English language textbooks was introduced called *New Method*, and these were later replaced with the *Modern Reader* series. However, no significant changes to Libya's educational system took place until the bloodless coup of 1st September 1969 led by General Muammar Gaddafi (Abd-El-Khalick and Lederman, 2000). During his rule, additional primary schools were established and spread all over the country and it became compulsory for all Libyan children to attend primary education. This is considered one of the most significant changes made since the revolution and contributed to structuring the education system in Libya (Said et al., 2005, cited in Almansuri, 2018). Under the Gaddafi regime, the Ministry of Education revised the English language curriculum. The result was the introduction of the *English for Libya* curriculum, which mainly focused on improving learners' communicative skills to enable them to use the English language more effectively. The curriculum remained in place until early 1986. Although Gaddafi contributed to developing education in the country, he also supported liberal, revolutionary, anti-Western, and anti-Israeli movements around the world, particularly in Europe and South America, as he believed that the people leading these movements were threatened by their governments (Blanchard, 2016). Gaddafi provided every form of support to these movements, including money and even weapons, to help them stand up to their enemies. Gaddafi's policies contributed to the 'souring of US relations' (Blanchard, 2016, p. 21), and his acts were considered to be an attack on America and the West, who accused him of providing support to terrorists in the region. In 1988, Gaddafi was accused of killing 270 people by blowing up an airplane belonging to Pan Am airlines. Two suspects were identified by the court in the US. The US then demanded Gaddafi hand over the two suspects immediately, but Gaddafi refused to do so. Gaddafi's act led to the imposition of international sanctions, which continued for 20 years. Consequently, this led to Gaddafi banning foreign language education, including English, as a reaction to the US decision. This clearly had a negative impact on English language learning in Libya, and subsequently on the proficiency of those becoming English language teachers. Although the Libyan regime never admitted bombing the Pan Am

Airlines plane, it accepted responsibility for the tragedy and paid billions of dollars in compensation (The Guardian, 2018). This led to the lifting of international sanctions in the early 2000s, 'followed by economic liberalization, oil sales, and foreign investment that brought new wealth to some Libyans' (Blanchard, 2016, p. 22). Until 2011, before Gaddafi was killed by Libyan rebels, relations between the regime and the West began to stabilise and foreign language education resumed (Aloreibi and Carey, 2017). After the *Libya of Tomorrow* project was launched in the mid-2000s by Saif Al-Islam, the eldest son of Gaddafi (Gheblawi, 2011), the Libyan Government adopted a well-planned policy to introduce a new system of English language education to keep pace with the global developments and to improve the country's economy. At the same time, it invited international companies and business owners to invest in Libya. In 2000, Libya's Ministry of Education ntroduced a new English language series called *English for Libya* based on communicative language teaching (CLT) principles, which is still being used today (see Section 1.2.2.2 above). However, the 2000 curriculum suffered various setbacks due to various cultural and contextual reasons. Additionally, as a result of the ban on English education in schools, learners suffered from the lack of qualified teachers (Najeeb, 2013). Although Libya is an oil-rich country with adequate financial resources (Ayub et al., 2016), its English language education has not been of the standard expected. Partly, this may be the result of the political tensions with the West, particularly with the US, during the Gaddafi regime, as mentioned earlier, and partly because of the lack of a well-designed policy to achieve the objectives of the revised English language curriculum.

Education in Libya is divided into two main systems, namely, the school system and the university system. Primary schools in Libya consist of six grades, while there are three years of preparatory and secondary grades (El-Hawat, 2006). There are different specialities within the secondary stage, where pupils study three main different disciplines: arts, sciences and vocational training. The educational authorities in Libya view education as the path to human and technological development and progress (Almansuri, 2018) and have stated their intention to innovate in order to keep pace with the global economic changes and create a modern Libyan society (Najeeb, 2013, Mohsen, 2014). A good practical example of these noble intentions is the creation of three specialisations for the country's secondary and high schools to allow pupils to choose their own learning paths. However, bringing educational innovations is not without problems. As will be discussed in-depth later in this thesis, the Libyan educational authority employed a top-down approach to introduce the present English

language curriculum, which seems to be in harmony with the Libyan cultural, personal and classroom realities, all of which will be discussed in this research study.

The following table provides a clear view of the various stages of the Libyan educational system, including the duration, age and overall length of each stage.

**Table 1**: Educational Structure in Libya

| Education | School/level | Grade From | Grade to | Age from | Age to | Years | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | Primary School | 1 | 6 | 6 | 12 | 6 | |
| Secondary | Secondary education | 12 | 14 | 12 | 15 | 3 | Students attend vocational or technical schools for secondary education. The other alternative is religious secondary schools. |
| Secondary | Specialised secondary | 15 | 19 | 15 | 18 | 3 | Lasts for 3-4 years. Considered A levels |
| Tertiary | Higher education | | | 18 | 22 | | Higher education ranges from 3 years at technical colleges to 6 years at other colleges. |

**Adapted from Classbase (2018)**

Almost all Libyan school children attend state schools as this is compulsory. They should complete all of the stages from the early primary stages to the end of secondary school. Passing from one year to another requires students to pass an examination; failure means that they may not be able to continue their education. Similarly, secondary school students have to pass what we call the "national exam" to secure a place in a university or a college (Alhmali, 2007)**.**

The general objectives of education in Libya are stated clearly prior to the Libyan government's introduction of the education system in the country including the English language curriculum. As shown in Table 2, the educational authority in Libya aims to enable students to achieve a holistic education and a wide range of learning outcomes – from knowledge development (e.g. scientific thinking) to acquisition of various skills (e.g. self-learning, thinking skills, intercultural skills) and societal values (mainly derived from the

Koran and the Sunnah), to social and/or psychomotor development. The objectives of the education system in Libya are illustrated in the following table:

**Table 2:** The objectives of the education system in Libya

| **Objectives** | **Description** |
|---|---|
| Obtain a religious education | Enables students to understand Islamic values derived from the Koran and the Sunnah. |
| Develop mastery of the mother tongue | Helps students to properly use the Arabic language in all areas with an interest in foreign languages to communicate with the world. |
| Develop political understanding | Helps students understand the theoretical theses of Jamahiriya and to translate Jamahiriyan thought into practical actions. |
| Develop a sense of belonging | Develops the students' sense of national belonging, and deepens their pride in the Arabic Nation and Islamic civilisation. |
| Develop sense of regional belonging | Develops the students' sense of belonging geographically and historically to the African continent. |
| Skill development | Enables students to acquire the skills, positive attitudes and cultural and social values appropriate to the needs of the student and the needs of the society. |
| Acquisition of spiritual and moral values | Enables students to represent the spiritual and moral values and to develop artistic taste and an aesthetic sense. |
| Ensure diversity of educational opportunity | Provides educational opportunities for all and helps students to choose the specialisation that best matches their orientation and abilities, and meets the needs of the society to achieve sustainable human development. |
| Develop self-discovery and self-learning | Provides and supports new types of education and enables students to discover their abilities and acquire knowledge through self-learning. |
| The development of scientific thinking | Enables students to acquire the skills of thinking and scientific analysis to keep pace with the scientific and technical developments in the contemporary world. |
| Grow physical and mental state | Helps students to achieve growth in their integrated physical and mental, psychological, emotional and social development. |
| Develop understanding of international societies | Helps students to understand the developments at the local, national, regional and global levels, including the development of their feelings and sense of the important spaces surrounding Libyan society, such as the Arabic space, the African space, the Mediterranean space, and the global spaces. |
| Contribute to the global human society and its progression | Helps students understand and recognise the world as a global human society in which they have an interest in its progress and evolution. |
| Develop intercultural communication skills | Develops students' capacity to interact with other cultures and open up to the world, qualifying them as citizens able to live in harmony and positively in the global community. |
| Contribute to innovation and creation | Develops the partnership of innovation and creation, and enables students to use diverse sources of knowledge. |
| Learn from theoretical information | Achieves a balance between theoretical information and its practical applications, and establishes linkage and integration between different fields of knowledge, which helps to apply theory to one’s life. |
| Provide diverse learning opportunities | Enables people with special needs, the gifted, disabled and distinct to enjoy educational opportunities appropriate to their abilities and needs. |
| Develop environmental | Develops students' environmental awareness and motivates them to |

| | |
|---|---|
| awareness | maintain the integrity of the environment and its various resources and provide positive contributions to solving environmental problems. |
| Encourage social peace and defend human rights. | Enables students to understand the principles of security and social peace and human rights, and encourages them to build a peaceful society, a community of mutual understanding, dialogue and global tolerance, recognising their society's rights within the international community and taking pride in one's nation and its role in human civilisation. |

Adapted from The General Peoples' Committee of Education (2008, pp. 4-5)

Although the priority of the educational authorities, even before the curricular reform, has always been to improve the country's education system, the educational objectives and outcomes, even today, have not been met due to various contextual factors related to the introduction of curriculum reform. These factors include the quality of English language teacher education, a lack of school infrastructure such as computers and laboratories, and large class sizes (Khalifa, 2002, Orafi and Borg, 2009, Altaieb and Omar, 2015, Aloreibi and Carey, 2017). The shortage of essential infrastructure could be due to the fact that the educational authorities have paid too much attention to increasing the number of schools to cope with the large number of students, rather than to improving the quality of schools. However, it remains difficult to equip the very large number of schools in Libya with the facilities they require, particularly due to the unstable political situation (Aloreibi and Carey, 2017). Furthermore, it would be very expensive to supply all schools with the required facilities (Ryu, 2008). But, going beyond this, it is important to mention the tribal nature of Libyan society and its powerful role in controlling social norms and legal aspects.

There are 140 main tribes in Libya (Tempelhof and Omar, 2012), all of which have leaders considered to be wise and who are highly respected by other Libyans, whether from the same tribe or from other tribes. Respect for the tribe leaders stems from the important role they play in resolving social tensions and disputes among members of these tribes (Aloreibi and Carey, 2017). Under Gaddafi, many tribal leaders were given a social role to administer and control the legal aspects of Libyan society (ibid.). However, Gaddafi gave no political role to these tribal leaders, while simultaneously exploiting their loyalty to his regime (Myers, 2013). Indeed, the loyalties of Libya's tribes were misused by Gaddafi, who engaged in clientelism, giving loyal tribes 'access to institutions, business opportunities, and bureaucratic approval, or even to clear the mundane hurdles of everyday life [through] strategically placed intermediaries' (Bates and Rassam, cited in Myers, 2013, p. 10). This suggests that the decisions or choices made by people, including school teachers, such as the choice of using

certain teaching methods, might be overridden by different choices made by tribal leaders authorised to do so by Gaddafi. Although Gaddafi's regime is now over and the power of tribal leaders to influence other people's decisions has significantly decreased, it is worth noting that there are cases where, for example, school decisions are still influenced by the interference of tribal leaders. Therefore, one can argue that tribal interference can have a significant impact on teachers' actual practices and decisions.

### 1.2.2 English Language Curriculum in Libya

The focus of this research is on the English language curriculum that was introduced in 2000. The research is concerned with the level achieved by higher secondary school English language students. I am interested particularly in this stage, firstly, because I am a university teacher who teaches the cohorts of students who have just finished their secondary education. Secondly, I have major concerns about the low level of English language proficiency of these new students. This low level of language competency has two implications for us as university teachers and for the new students themselves. For university teachers, it is difficult to teach the advanced university English language curriculum to students with very low English proficiency as the curriculum includes various subjects which require excellent language skills and makes certain assumptions about what students will be able to do when they arrive. For the new students, the lack of necessary language skills means that they are more likely to fail from the start, which will cause feelings of frustration for them and their families. The other challenge which we, as university English language teachers, often have to deal with is the pressure which some families put on us when they try to convince us that their children are able to complete their university English language education. In many cases, the pressure placed on us by families is so intense that we (university teachers) have no other option but to agree to continue teaching these low-achieving students. The implications of this situation both for society in general and for English education in particular are huge. Based on my experience as a university teacher, low-achieving students tend to leave university with little knowledge of the English language, let alone of teaching and learning. Once they are employed as school teachers (as teaching is currently the only profession that language graduates can join – see discussion in Chapter 5), their weaknesses in teaching are evident in their students' language achievement. Therefore, the low-achieving language university graduates have a direct impact on their subsequent schools' language education, where their students' language acquisition is minimal.

Such concerns sparked my interest in investigating the entire state of English language teaching in secondary schools to determine the major reason(s) why we still receive low-achieving students at our university. My deepest interest lies in the relationship between the intentions of the recent English language curriculum, on the one hand, and the practices and experience of teachers, on the other, and how this relationship is affected by teachers' conceptions and the social and contextual realities of the school settings.

This study aims to examine current teachers' experiences of implementing the English language curriculum in Libyan secondary schools and to cast light on how teachers' beliefs and other contextual factors influence the way teachers have perceived and implemented the educational reform since 2000. Given the observed learning deficiencies among secondary school students, I am interested in gaining an in-depth understanding of what happens in classrooms, the extent to which these practices reflect the curriculum's recommendations, and the reasons for any discrepancies, if any are found.

As many teachers have experience of teaching the two different English curricula, they may have their own views about whether or not these two curricula are useful and appropriate to their context. The next section provides a comparison between the old and the more recent English language curricula. This will inform the thesis of the principles of the two curricula and also help us to understand how teachers envision their roles in relation to their views about the previous and the present English language curricula.

#### 1.2.2.1 The Previous Curriculum

English teaching in Libya started in the late seventies when the English language was introduced into the Libyan education system due to the important role of English in many different domains. At that time, an English curriculum called *Living English for Libya*, written by non-natives, was introduced in intermediate and secondary state schools (Alkhaldy, 2012).

The *Living English for Libya* curriculum (see Appendix A for a sample), which was entirely teacher-centred, was designed to consist of three years at the intermediate stage (preparatory school), starting from 7$^{th}$ grade, and continue for three more years at the secondary stage (high school) (Altaieb and Omar, 2015). Four English classes were given per week, with each class lasting 45 minutes. However, English was not the only class taught, and as school timetables were congested, most English classes were pushed toward the end of the school day. By the time of the day when English was taught, students might well be exhausted,

especially after dealing with more complex classes such as maths, physics and chemistry, and this could affect their English language learning. As a result, students tended to leave school with little or no knowledge of how to use what they had learned in meaningful communication (Altaieb and Omar, 2015).

As noted above, after Libya was bombed by the US in 1986, the country's leader, Muammar Gaddafi, banned the teaching of any foreign language; English teaching was only resumed in the mid-1990s (Aloreibi and Carey, 2017). Needless to say, these circumstances had a huge impact on English learning in Libya, and left a large gap in English language teaching and learning in the country, with teachers and learners unable to develop their English language teaching and learning skills.

Subsequently, it was the importance of the English language as the lingua franca and its continued importance in connecting people globally that prompted the Libyan educational authority to resume the teaching of English in the country (Orafi and Borg, 2009, Altaieb and Omar, 2015, Aloreibi and Carey, 2017). Thus, the Libyan Government in cooperation with the British Council introduced the *English for Libya* curriculum in 2000 for preparatory and secondary schools (Orafi, 2008, Alkhaldy, 2012).

#### 1.2.2.2 The Present English Language Curriculum

The present curriculum was introduced in 2000 (Alkhaldy, 2012) and was presented in the form of different textbooks for all school stages. As mentioned earlier, the textbooks are called *English for Libya*. They were designed and published in the United Kingdom by Garnet in cooperation with the CERC in Libya. The curriculum included various textbooks: students' textbooks and teachers' handbook, which included an audio cassette. This curriculum is still in use and is the central focus of this thesis. In the next section, I discuss the curriculum's overall structure as well as its objectives and methodological principles, providing critiques as appropriate.

##### 1.2.2.2.1 The Present Curriculum Structure

The students' textbooks are divided into two sections: a course book and a work book. There are eight units each consisting of twelve pages. Each unit is also divided into two sections, which are designed to relate to two different specialist academic areas: literacy and science (see Appendix B). For students of both specialisations, the first unit consists of identical

materials. The students will have the opportunity to study them from their first day of attending English class. Each unit covers different topic areas, developed through a focus on vocabulary, grammar, writing, speaking, listening and communicative learning lessons. Each unit is divided into twelve lessons (e.g. reading, vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening, etc.) in which students engage in a variety of activities, covering multiple aspects of the English language. These lessons typically comprise reading (two lessons), vocabulary and grammar (three lessons), listening, speaking and writing (three lessons) and specialisation (four lessons).

The structures mentioned above are significantly different from those of the old curriculum. Looking closely at the above-mentioned examples of the lessons in the present English language curriculum, one can identify the underlying objectives of the curriculum. As the present English language curriculum aims to develop learners' communicative skills, a communicative approach to teaching language is employed; however, this communicative approach seems to have been incongruent with the contextual and personal realities of the Libyan context. The old curriculum, by contrast, aimed to develop learners' linguistic abilities only through mastering grammatical rules and memorising vocabulary. Thus, it is the communicative approach that distinguishes the present English language curriculum. This distinctiveness has led to certain challenges, which arguably have implications not only for how the teachers teach the subject but also for the overall learning experience of Libyan secondary students.

#### 1.2.2.2.2 Overall Objectives and Principles of the Present English Language Curriculum

According to the teacher's book (a book providing pedagogical instructions and guidance for teachers), the course textbooks are 'designed to consolidate and further develop understanding of the grammatical system, to increase secondary students' range of active vocabulary and to extend their ability in the four language skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing' (D'Arcy and Schoenmann, 2008, p. 1). The teacher's book provides secondary teachers with a comprehensive guide to how to use the course. The materials are designed for one year of English study consisting of approximately 100 teaching periods in total. The following table summarises the curricular principles as highlighted in the teacher's book.

**Table 3:** The principles of the present secondary English language curriculum

| Focus | Curriculum principles |
|---|---|
| **Reading** | • Aims to help students develop the sub-skills of prediction, inference, reading for gist, reading for specific information, and the ability to work out meaning from the context. |
| **Grammar** | • Aims to activate the grammatical points which students have already learned through the productive skills of speaking and writing. |
| **Listening** | • Aims to develop the sub-skills of prediction, inference, listening for gist, listening for specific information, and to enhance students' competence and confidence in listening comprehension. |
| **Speaking** | • Aims to promote fluent communication and to make talking in English a regular activity among the students.<br>• Discourages error correction during the speaking stage. |
| **Writing** | • Aims to develop the knowledge of language and grammar the students have already acquired by producing longer pieces of writing.<br>• Considers the process of writing as important as the end product, and encourages students to work together, to help each other with note taking and editing, and to produce work with a communicative purpose. |
| **Pair work** | • Encourages the use of pair work and considers it a good opportunity for students to speak the target language. |
| **Error correction** | • Making mistakes is part of the language learning process. |

**Adapted from Orafi (2015, pp. 5-6)**

From the principles mentioned above, it would appear that the recent English curriculum is based on constructivist learning theory: 'the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves—each learner constructs meaning individually (and socially)—as he or she learns' (Hein, 1991, p. 22). Generally, and not specifically related to learning a foreign language, the constructivist theory of learning suggests that knowledge of the world and understanding is constructed individually (Powell and Kalina, 2009). Although constructivism is not a theory of teaching, teachers are encouraged to employ a completely different teaching approach from their traditional approach (Fosnot, 2005). With this approach, students are expected to be encouraged to participate by being involved in interactive learning sessions, involving such tasks as problem solving and group work (Juvova et al., 2015). The role of the constructivist teacher, then, is to facilitate, mentor and encourage learners to engage in such activities (ibid.). The present English language curriculum is based on the Communicative Language Teaching approach (hereafter CLT) because, at the time of its design, this approach was becoming popular across the world of English language teaching. CLT is another

important concept for this research and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. It is sufficient to mention here that CLT is the counter-reaction to the grammar translation method (the method which emphasises the mastery of linguistic knowledge regarding the target language). CLT emphasises that learners must participate in cooperative and meaningful interaction with others (Dornyei, 2013).

In a special investigative attempt, Orafi (2008) further contacted the publishing company (Garnet) and asked for any documents which could explain their intentions and thinking behind publishing the recent curriculum. He managed to obtain a document from the publishing company which outlined the objectives that guided them when writing the materials. According to Orafi (2008), the document provided by the company contained the following objectives:

- Students to leave school with high communicative ability so they become able to use the English language in communicative settings both orally and in a written form.
- Students to be motivated so that they become interested in using language communicatively.
- Students are expected to develop reading and listening skills such as skimming and scanning through a series of complex reading and listening activities.

It is evident that the recent curriculum presents a significant change in the principles of English language learning and teaching in Libya, and to perceptions of teachers' and students' roles. Thus, the teacher is no longer seen as the knowledge holder and students are no longer considered passive receivers of that knowledge; rather, teachers start to perceive themselves as facilitators who should provide help and support to their students so that they (the students) make the most of their learning experience (Benson and Voller, 2013).

Considering the different aims and objectives of the previous and the present English language curricula can help us understand the complexity of English language teaching. Teachers are likely to hold beliefs about the flexibility and practicality of the present English curriculum based upon their experiences of teaching the previous curriculum. Similarly, they are also likely to hold beliefs about their tried and trusted teaching practices. In addition, the suggested new role of students in the present English curriculum might contrast with teachers'

views of their students' roles in the old curriculum. Such views might include the idea that learners should sit quietly and listen while the teacher is passing down knowledge to them – as is characteristic of teacher-centred curricula (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Arguably, their beliefs can potentially interfere with their new roles of communicative language teachers. Therefore, it is important to appreciate the differences between the underlying principles of the two curricula and how teachers conceptualise these differences – positively or negatively. The focus of this research is not only to gain a sound appreciation of the numerous observed challenges affecting the teaching and learning of the present English curriculum, but, more importantly, to identify the original source(s) of these challenges taking into consideration that teachers have been teaching the present English curriculum for almost 20 years since it was introduced in 2000. There is also the intention that these ongoing challenges be subsequently addressed and resolved.

## 1.3 English Language Teaching in Libya: The Problem

In the 21st century, English has become an important language in higher education, research, business and commerce, as well as in many other fields. As the world becomes a global village, the role of the English language has necessitated changes in the language education policies of many countries around the world. Many Western countries have incorporated the teaching of English language in their schools so that their students can keep pace with the global developments in many aspects of life and to become open-minded to this culturally diverse world we live in. In Middle Eastern and North African countries, similar actions have been taken to incorporate English language education. With the objective of becoming a part of this global village, the Libyan educational authority has also introduced English language education into schools to enable Libyan children to become members of the English-speaking world. However, introducing a new English language curriculum is not without its challenges Many research studies have been carried out to explore the challenges relating to teachers and their educational practices, such as their knowledge, their beliefs, their perceptions, the academic culture and the context, as well as how these aspects relate to one another theoretically (Fung and Chow, 2002, Radzi et al., 2007, Dailey, 2010, Vaezi and Abbaspour, 2014). However, teaching is an activity that requires teachers to be practical and to find ways to apply theory to practice. This implies that teachers interact with their fellow teachers in an educational society because people, especially teachers, are active members of society and they do not learn in isolation (Lucas, 2011). In other words, people construct knowledge in

their social contexts, as is the case with Libyan teachers. Libyan teachers have learned to be teachers in their particular social contexts, putting knowledge about teaching and learning into action; thus, their educational practices are socially constructed.

The practices of Libyan English language teachers can be explained by the influence of their cultural backgrounds (Elabbar, 2011), for example, how they see themselves as teachers and how their society sees them and their learners. Teachers' practices can also be explained by the beliefs they hold about teaching and learning (ibid.), e.g., how they see their role and their students' roles in the classroom. Teachers' performance can also be understood as a result of the early education they received (ibid.). As an example, language teachers taught using a traditional approach seem to transfer that teaching approach into their own teaching practices. Tudor (2001) suggests that there is general agreement that, in certain contexts, sociocultural realities have a significant influence on teaching behaviours. This would imply that teachers' and students' beliefs and expectations are directly affected by the cultural norms of that particular context. In other words, teachers and students already know what their responsibilities are in the classroom (ibid.). See also Section 2.1 below for a discussion of the relevant theory. In the following section, I will discuss the key aspects of Libyan educational culture.

Drawing upon my previous experience as an English language teacher at secondary school, I have observed that Libyan students sit quietly in the classroom and conventionally wait for their teacher to deliver the information to them, which the pupils subsequently memorise and revise in order to pass an exam. Sitting passively in the classroom does not only imply complete reliance on the teacher's efforts; it might also relate to certain cultural norms. Specifically, students' engagement in an activity might be viewed as an interruption by the teacher, thus, students' engagement could be seen as impolite behaviour (Yu, 2001, Hu, 2002, Brown, 2009, Gulnaz et al., 2015). To avoid any misunderstanding, students have to raise their hands if they want to discuss an issue or participate in a task and wait to be called upon by the teacher (Aldabbus, 2008).

The M.o.E. in Libya seems to have neglected the cultural and contextual challenges that English language teachers face. Evidence of this lack of awareness can be seen in the top-down approach to English language curriculum reform that the M.o.E. adopted. In this top-down approach, the M.o.E. seems to have considered teachers to be qualified enough to implement and achieve the objectives of the reform. This seems to have made the teaching of English in Libya even more complicated. These managerial expectations tend to place a great

deal of pressure on English teachers in teaching the present English language curriculum, while providing them with insufficient training and professional support. The lack of teacher training might affect teachers' uptake of the reform. In Libyan schools, most English language teachers are Libyans who obtained their bachelor's degrees in English from a university or an institute. This is enough to qualify them for the position of school-level English language teachers, with no further requirement for special training or a diploma in teacher training. It is therefore not surprising that most EFL teachers lack specific training in teaching. While schools do have some basic infrastructure, they lack more advanced and vital facilities such as language labs and other audio-visual aids to make teaching effective and dynamic. In addition, most Libyan schools have large numbers of students, with an average 40-50 students in each class. Moreover, it seems that curriculum planners and the educational authority have underestimated the role of teachers' beliefs, as well as the role of other contextual realities, in the implementation of curricular reforms (Levin and Wadmany, 2006, Crossley et al., 2017). The primary focus of this study, in addition to exploring the influences of teachers' beliefs and culture and other contributory factors in the implementation of the present English language curriculum, is to gain a greater appreciation of the underlying reasons behind the teachers' pedagogical challenges. This study aims to comprehend the continuing existence of these constraints after almost 20 years. A comprehensive analysis of the historical contexts, issues and challenges which have dominated Libyan English education in the last 20 years is necessary in order to understand the factors that contributed to how effective (or ineffective) the implementation of the English curriculum has been.

In seeking useful resources with which to explore this phenomenon, including a theoretical framework for understanding the contextual and individual issues in Libyan schools, this study investigates the relationship between the intentions of the current English curriculum, teachers' perceptions and the actual implementation of the curriculum. To analyse this relationship, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is deemed appropriate and useful as a theoretical framework to understand the interaction of personal and contextual features that shape the teachers' pedagogical practices and teaching goals. This will be discussed in Chapter 2.

## 1.4 The Research Rationale

Although I was not involved in the introduction of this curriculum in 2000, I had the chance, in mid-2014, to listen to three teachers speaking at national briefing sessions. In these

sessions, curriculum advisors provided some level of teaching support, with guidance in how to implement the new English language curriculum. However, this support mostly consisted of possible ways to implement the curriculum and meet its aims and objectives. The training sessions lasted for only one week, with no follow-up training. In these short sessions, teachers were merely introduced to the new curriculum, with little guidance provided as to how to achieve its objectives using the new teaching methods outlined in the teachers' guidebook. Much of the training also took place outside schools, in poor environments lacking basic facilities such as visual aids and computers. In addition, as these training sessions were offered in winter, teachers complained about the very cold lecture halls in which they took place. The situation caused such serious discomfort to the training course participants that many of them dropped out of the course before it finished. Arguably, this abandonment of the course was more due to the quality of these sessions than to where they took place. These training sessions are crucial since teachers seemed to have insufficient knowledge about how to implement the new curriculum effectively. Teachers seemed to lack knowledge concerning the theory behind the curriculum, their new roles and responsibilities, and how to use the new teaching methods effectively. Arguably, teachers come to these sessions with pre-existing beliefs about teaching and learning, and if these beliefs are not challenged (perhaps by providing sufficient training), implementing the new curriculum becomes unfeasible, and the implementation process will more likely fail from the start. However, previous research in a range of contexts has suggested that curriculum makers tend to ignore the important role that teachers' beliefs and other social and contextual settings play in the success or failure of curriculum implementation (Eisenbach, 2012, Richardson et al., 1991, Hamdan, 2015). It could be argued that appropriate and adequate consideration of such factors might facilitate the implementation process (Kırkgöz, 2008, Orafi and Borg, 2009). Instead, the strong expectation at the time was that after this one-week training session, teachers should be able to adopt and implement the reform.

Once the reform had been introduced, several concerns were raised about its implementation (Orafi and Borg, 2009). In my informal discussions with different Libyan headteachers, for example, during discussions about the suitability of the recent English curriculum for students, headteachers often blamed teachers' lack of teaching skills. Their view was that teachers were failing in their implementation of the recent curriculum. One headteacher in Libya contended that the curriculum is excellent, and that it is the teachers who do not have the required ability and skills to teach it. For their part, teachers raised concerns that they face

obstacles during the implementation of this curriculum. Thus, there seem to be serious issues regarding how to teach the recent curriculum. These might be related to the conflict between teachers and headteacher views in terms of teacher quality. Teachers might also hold conflicting beliefs about how to teach the recent English curriculum or be concerned about the numerous contextual and social barriers which can impact their teaching significantly. Therefore, this research study also seeks to explore these issues and link them to teachers' actual classroom behaviour with respect to how they teach the recent English curriculum.

As a university teacher in Libya, in addition to my inherent interest in this research topic, it was the "tug of war" between teachers on the one side and curriculum planners and principals on the other that sparked my interest in examining what actually happens inside the classrooms. It is widely recognised that teachers' voices should not be neglected; thus, an investigation of teachers' beliefs and other contextual realities which influence teachers' uptake of the curriculum is arguably an ideal starting point. I believe that this research investigation can have significant implications for reviving secondary ELT in Libya.

## 1.5 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Following the introductory chapter (Chapter 1), Chapter 2 will be divided into two main sections. The first section will review the core notions in the field of curriculum that inform the study. First, I will begin with a description of the theoretical framework adopted in this study, and then present an overview of the curriculum and how it is defined. I will also discuss existing research into the key factors which influence the uptake of the intended curriculum reform. This section will enable a critique of the introduction of the English language curriculum to Libya's educational system.

Chapter 3 will discuss the notion of teachers' beliefs. First, I will consider the issue of defining the term "belief" and discuss the relationship between beliefs and knowledge as a key issue in defining beliefs. Second, I will discuss how beliefs are formed and how teachers' pedagogical beliefs can influence their classroom practices. The purpose of Chapter 3 is to review the existing literature and research studies and then link them to my research data. The literature review is intended to contribute by setting the research context in which I will address the following research questions:

1- How do Libyan secondary English teachers perceive the new curriculum?

a- What views do they hold about the reform?

b- What beliefs do they hold about teaching and learning? How do these beliefs relate to the agenda of the reform?

c- Where do these beliefs stem from? How are these beliefs reflected in their classrooms?

d- How do teachers find the supporting documents (e.g. teachers' guidebook, etc.)?

2- What are the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the dissemination of the innovation?

a- What was the model employed to disseminate the curriculum to the teachers?

b- What was the training provision like? What were teachers' views of the effectiveness of the training provision?

c- How do these perceptions affect teachers' pedagogical practices?

3- How do teachers implement the required CLT policies? What are the implications for current and future practice?

a- What types of lesson activities are employed?

b- How well do teachers implement the teaching methodologies as intended by the reform developers?

c- What facilitators and constraints do teachers encounter in establishing a CLT environment?

d- Where the CLT approach is not implemented, what alternative teaching methods and activities do teachers employ and why?

A detailed account of the methodology and methods used in the research is presented in Chapter 4. Here, I describe and justify the mode of enquiry that I used in relation to the research questions, the pilot study, the contexts of this study, and the research participants. Subsequently, I will give a detailed description and justification of the data collection and analysis processes.

The research findings will be reported in Chapter 5. I will also present an overview of the key findings of the research that derived from the different data sources used, such as vignettes,

interviews, and classroom observations. The findings will be reported systematically, starting with the vignettes and finishing with the data emerging from the classroom observations.

Chapter 6 presents a discussion of my key research findings. This will include a discussion of the theoretical understandings of the case under study and a discussion of teachers' perceptions and implementation of the present English language curriculum.

In Chapter 7, I will present my conclusions from the discussion in Chapter 6. I will first re-present my main research questions and offer answers derived from my findings. Also, any further key issues that emerged beyond the scope of the original research questions will be outlined in this chapter. Second, I will explore the practical implications of my research on Libya's English language education, particularly the implications for its higher education. Third, I will highlight the limitations of the study and provide suggestions for future research. Following this, I will discuss the conclusions, implications, and potential contributions of this research study. Finally, the limitations of the research will be presented.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter begins with a description of the theoretical framework adopted in this study and a review of the prominent concepts in curriculum development and reforms: definitions, philosophies, and challenges. It then proceeds to review crucial concepts related to teachers' beliefs and practices.

## 2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework employed for this research study is Cultural-Historical Activity Theory. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (henceforth CHAT) is very useful in interpreting how teachers' and learners' classroom behaviours are influenced by their teaching environments. CHAT is, in fact, a development of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (Edwards, 2011). Vygotsky (1978) maintained that human beings are actors who interact with mediating objects of their environments. These mediating objects include tools, signs, and instruments that all lead to an outcome.

Before elaborating further on CHAT, it is important to note the difference between socio-cultural theory and social constructivism, which is in fact very small. The difference lies in their underlying epistemologies. Social constructivism developed from constructivism, which suggests that individuals develop and create knowledge by building on previous knowledge and experience. In social constructivism, knowledge is still seen as being created by the individual, but through social interactions with others, rather than in isolation. Vygotsky, however, suggests that culture plays a vital role in the creation of knowledge, and identifies cultural tools and artifacts as elements that are vital in the construction of non-specific knowledge (how we know about things) in general. The key cultural tool is language, which is used as a mediating tool by an 'expert' to support the learning of someone less knowledgeable. It is through language that knowledge is shared about how societies or groups 'work' and about what is considered important in these cultural contexts.

The next section will demonstrate how these key ideas of cultural tools and mediation are developed in CHAT.

### 2.1.1 Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

Educational change, particularly changes from traditional to more modern teaching approaches (such as CLT) can face many constraints, which results in complications for teaching (Zembylas, 2010). The characteristics of classroom interaction can be determined by looking closely at what is happening in the classroom. This implies that analysing the features of classroom behaviour can be facilitated by exploring classroom behaviour in its context and by relating it to classroom surroundings (Finch, 2002). It is possible through such analysis to gain a more holistic picture of interactions in their context (ibid.).

CHAT is 'a cross-disciplinary framework for studying how humans purposefully transform natural and social reality, including themselves, as an ongoing culturally and historically situated, materially and socially mediated process' (Roth et al., 2012, p. 2).

CHAT is based upon three main ideas: a) people act together, they learn by practically doing and communicating through their actions as they work; b) people make, adopt and use tools of all kinds to communicate and learn; and c) community is at the core of the process of interpreting and making meaning, and, as a result, the basis of all kinds of communicating, learning and acting. The term CHAT was first introduced by Michael Cole and later popularised by Engeström.

The first generation of activity theory was based on the concept of mediation proposed by Vygotsky. During this period, studies mostly focused on individuals. In the second generation of activity theory, Engeström advocated research on artefacts as inseparable and essential parts of human activity. However, he claimed that in order to investigate and understand mediation, it is important to focus on other components of an activity system when a single activity is being studied.

In its third generation, Engeström (1999) considered multiple activities as the unit of analysis for activity theory, rather than merely individual activities; that is, he included the structure of the social world in his analysis. The third generation of activity theory as proposed by Engeström sought to understand dialogues, multiple perspectives, and multiple interacting activity systems. He drew on ideas of multiple voices in order to expand on the theory's second generation. The term "multiple voices" is used in this study to refer to perceptions of more than one person, or simply to the voices of many in the society.

The idea of multiple activity systems within which contradictions and struggles occur between these interacting systems in the light of the motives and objects of the activity calls for an analysis of power and control within these activity systems. Figure 1 below represents the third generation of activity theory. The following section elaborates more on these notions.

Engeström (2001, pp. 136-137) summarised activity theory in terms of five principles: The first principle is that the activity system is considered a part that has relations to other activity systems (at least two) within the same social system. The entire network of activities is then taken as the core unit of analysis.

The second principle is the 'multi-voicedness of activity systems' (Engeström 2001, p. 136). In this respect, an activity system encompasses 'a community of multiple points of view, traditions and interests' (ibid. p. 136). Participants in this activity system are given different responsibilities (division of labour). The participants bring their own 'histories' to the system, which itself carries multiple histories portrayed in its artefacts, rules and traditions. Engeström (2001) stated that such multi-voicedness within interacting activity systems can become 'a source of trouble' for participants when performing a given activity as different perspectives must be taken account of.

The third principle is historicity. According to Engeström (2001), activity systems transform over time, as they are not static or rigid entities. Their problems and potentials are understood based on their own histories. Therefore, the system itself must be examined in relation to both local and external drivers. It is argued that studying historicity in activity systems helps understand those systems because 'parts of older phases of activities stay often embedded in them as they develop' (Kuutti, 1996, p. 26). In the field of medicine, for example, medical work needs to be analysed against the history of 'the broader cultural, economic, and political context in which doctor-patient interaction is taking place' (Foot, 2014, p, 332). This may involve the analysis of the medical concepts, procedures and tools used and accumulated in the activity (i.e. medical practice).

The fourth principle is 'the central role of contradictions as sources of change and development' (Engeström, 2001, p. 136). In this view, contradictions can lead to tensions but can also lead to transformation in activity systems. In the field of education, for example, a contradiction in teachers' pedagogical behaviour might occur when a new teaching approach is introduced into their activity system which contradicts previously established element(s) in the existing activity system.

The fifth principle is 'the possibility of expansive transformations in activity systems' (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). Expansive learning allows for communicative transformations in the activity systems. This could be achieved through the reconceptualisation of the object and the motive of the activity. When object and motive are reconceptualised, there emerges 'a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity' (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). The emerging third generation of activity theory considers two activity systems as its smallest unit of analysis, inviting scholars to focus on researching the challenges and possibilities of inter-organisational learning (ibid.).

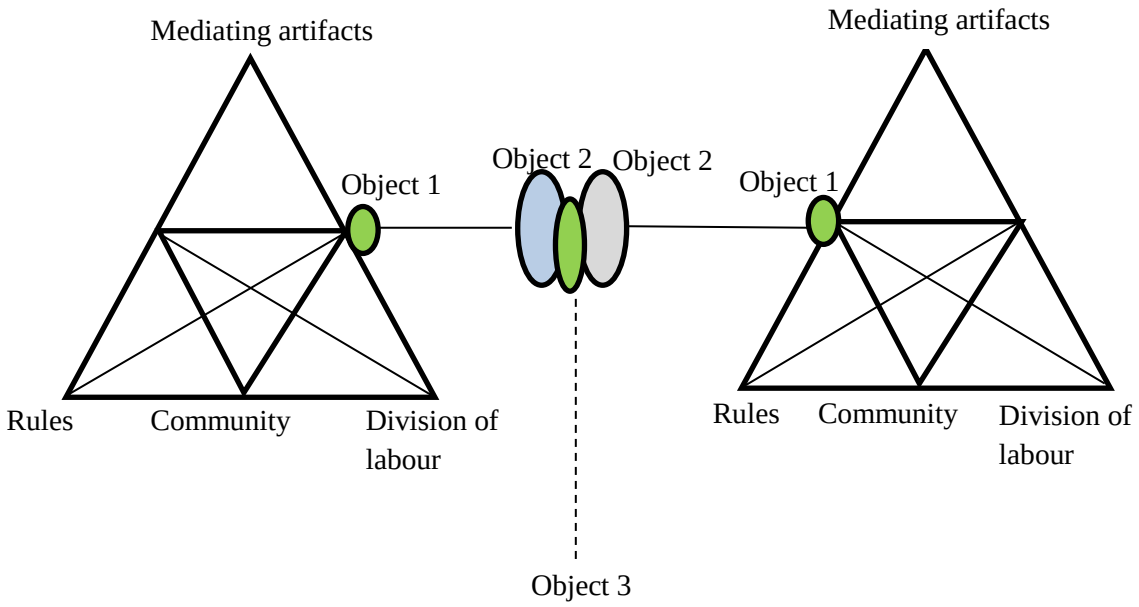



**Figure 1:** Third generation of activity theory (Engeström, 2001, p. 136)

The third generation of CHAT has been widely used in the field of education as a guiding theoretical framework to understand educational challenges. For example, the theory (using its elements) was employed to understand the relationship between emotion, cognition and action to explore how undergraduates are assessed (Li, 2016). In Denmark, it has been applied to understand the mediating effect that national testing has on students' motivation for learning, as well as to gain detailed information about how students and teachers experienced the national testing (Otrel-Cass et al., 2016). Moreover, the theory has been used to explore the ways in which novice teachers view how critical thinking can be effectively promoted (Mwalongo, 2016). In this context, "motivation" is defined as a process whereby goal-directed activities are initiated and sustained.

The following section will first illustrate the notion of activity in CHAT, and then examine the notion of mediation.

#### 2.1.1.1 The Notion of Activity in CHAT

According to Kuutti (1996), human activities are not static, but rather dynamic and changing over time. In Kuutti's (1996, p. 23) words:

> Activities are not static or rigid unities but they and their elements are under continuous change and development and this development is not linear or straightforward but uneven and discontinuous. This means that activities have also each a history of their own. Remains of older phases of activities stay often embedded in them as they develop, and historical analysis of the development is often needed in order to understand the recent situation.

Historical activity can influence present activities, particularly the focus of this research. As a university teacher, I believe that historical teaching practices (activity), especially those that we trust, are difficult to replace with new practices, even when we think that these new practices are more useful. There are several implications for this theory. First, activity cannot be isolated from the context in which it takes place. Therefore, an activity such as teaching English using CLT should be considered in the context in which it is taking place. If a teacher needs to carry out a group-work activity (the activity) to encourage collaborative learning (the outcome), an appropriate classroom layout should be set up (round tables, internet, etc.). Second, an activity is mediated by personal assumptions about the activity and the people involved in the activity, by societal views about the people involved in the activity, and by the tools available to support that activity. In the domain of English language teaching, a teacher may consider his/her role to be that of a classroom manager, while students play less independent roles in the learning process – this may clash with learner-centred education in general, which may in turn lead to lower levels of commitment to achieving the outcome of learner-centred education.

In general, activity theory treats human activities such as teaching as activities within a system. According to CHAT, this activity produces an outcome, i.e. 'the main focus of any activity is in the production of an outcome (object), physical or mental. The subject, an

individual or group, determines that there is a need or motive to fulfil, the object. Using the tools (e.g., technology, training, conceptual ideas, people) the subject moves toward accomplishing the object' (Koszalka and Wu, 2004, p. 492). Thus, the activity system is shown to be complex and human actions within the system are described in terms of an individual's or a group's desired outcome. According to CHAT, human actions are mediated by various cultural objects, such as tools, rules/norms, community, and division of labour (Engeström, 2001).

#### 2.1.1.2 The Notion of Mediation

The notion of mediation is a key element of CHAT. This idea is rooted in Vygotsky's (1978, p. 40) triangular model, whereby the conditioned, behaviourist direct connection between stimulus (S) and response (R) was reformulated to 'a complex, mediated act'. The following figures demonstrate Vygotsky's idea of stimulus (S) and response (R) and its reformulation as a culturally mediated act. The latter is illustrated as the triad of subject, object, and mediating artefacts.

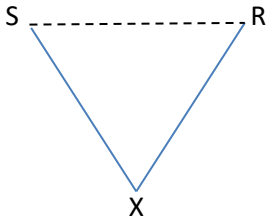



**Figure 2:** Vygotsky's triangle of stimulus (S) and response (R) and …(X) (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 40)

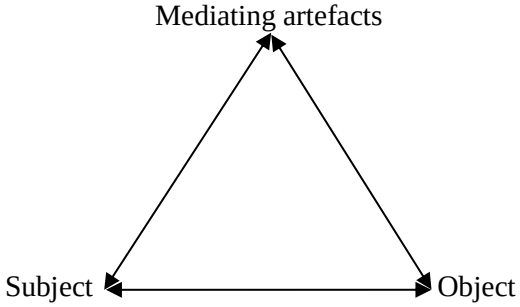



**Figure 3:** Mediated act triangle (Engeström, 2001, p. 134)

As noted above, the mediating artefacts are the material and conceptual tools and cultural and social rules which shape the ways in which individual actors achieve an object/goal (Engeström, 2001); that is the norms, traditions, regulations, beliefs and values which direct human activities. In turn, these activities are interpreted based on those artefacts. Another level of mediation is the division of labour. This refers to the amount of work that is assigned to an individual in a community (where "community" refers to people with multiple points of view, traditions and interests who share the object (goal) with the subject (teachers), such as school administrators or curriculum developers. According to CHAT, the division of labour in an activity creates different roles for the individual actors. The actors bring with them their own diverse histories, while the activity system has its own history depicted in its rules and conventions (Engeström, 2001). For example, actors such as language teachers may bring with them a history of the role that they and their students need to play in the language classroom. Such a history may or may not be consistent with the role suggested by the language curriculum developers. Hence, the new given role may or may not be adopted.

CHAT is concerned with studying certain activities within their context. It considers the context in which activities occur to be a key element in analysing these activities. This might imply that the 'use of isolated actions in analysing real-life situations outside a laboratory is much less fruitful. The reason for this is that actions are always situated into a context and they are impossible to understand without that context' (Kuutti, 1996, p. 23). This feature of CHAT is attractive for this research study as it involves analysis of teachers' activity (teaching the present English language curriculum) within a context (school); thus, CHAT may help us link teachers' activities to their classroom reality and also interpret any discrepancies, if identified, between the activity and the outcome that the present curriculum needs to achieve. As Edward (2011, p. 1) states, 'CHAT approaches to analyses of learning and the conditions in which it occurs are attractive to researchers who recognise the intertwining of human thought and action with practices and institutional affordances for action.' Many research studies have found CHAT useful for describing and understanding individuals' activities (see Isssroff and Scanlon, 2002, Russell and Schneiderheinze, 2005, Scheckle, 2014, Teodorczuk et al., 2015, Pham and Renshaw, 2015, Pham, 2016). For example, Pham (2016) 'investigated how a group of Vietnamese lecturers and students adapted their pedagogical practices to make student-centred pedagogies more effective in their classrooms'. Using the third generation of activity theory, he recognised that lecturers (in their activity system) were constrained by traditional examinations (an element of the

activity system) in their implementation of learner-centred pedagogies. Moreover, using activity theory allowed him to explore the potential space where culturally appropriate pedagogies could be developed by integrating hybrid practices – the use of traditional and learner-centred pedagogies simultaneously.

I intend to employ CHAT to interpret the findings of this research. I will examine the interaction of the personal and contextual features that shaped the teachers (the subject), their pedagogical practices (the actions in the activity system), and their teaching goals (the objects and outcomes of the activity system). To understand the performance of the teachers in school, it is important to look at the object of the activity within that school and beyond and how teachers' individual intentions and goals support or hinder them as participants in the classroom. Employing the notion of activity in my study will help me to determine the potentially contradictory relationship between teachers' beliefs and their activity (teaching) when working towards achieving a particular goal/outcome - in this case, CLT/learner-centred education. Furthermore, it will enable me to investigate the assumption that teachers' justifications for their chosen teaching methods (typically traditional) not only stem from their educational beliefs about teaching and learning but also from the interactions of their beliefs with their surroundings.

In the following section, I will review the literature related to curriculum development and reform in order to locate this study within the existing field. I begin by presenting an overview of the term "curriculum" as a concept, including its various definitions. I then move on to present four models of curriculum design, which highlight the various ways in which it is interpreted in different contexts. Next, I discuss curriculum reform and review the literature which investigates the relationship between curriculum reform, teachers' conceptions of the reform and its principles, and classroom performance.

## 2.2 What is Curriculum?

We should begin by clarifying what we understand by the term "curriculum", which, as Kelly (2009) notes, has been interpreted in multiple ways. Understanding the various definitions of "curriculum" can illustrate how different curriculum planners might conceptualise the term and help stipulate what a curriculum should include. A proper conceptualisation may not be achieved unless a proper definition is given. However, a consensus has yet to be reached regarding a suitable definition, which can lead to a fuzzy understanding of what a curriculum

actually is. Therefore, it has been suggested that any new curriculum needs to have clear objectives and guidelines for teaching, as failure to do so may affect its implementation (Kelly, 2009).

The word "curriculum" can be traced back to the Greek work "racecourse" (Kelly, 2009, p. 3), which implies that the school curriculum is a race that students should join and finish. In the race, the students are faced with hurdles, namely the curriculum subjects. According to Marsh (2009, p. 3), Western civilisation is heavily influenced by the fourth century BC Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, and the word "curriculum" was used to refer to the subjects taught in schools during the ancient Greek era. Later, in the twentieth century, the word "curriculum" came to be interpreted differently and subjects other than classics were added. With its meaning extended, a curriculum today includes resources such as the 'school documents, newspaper articles, committee reports and many academic textbooks' (Kelly, 2009, p. 3).

Ellis (2004) suggests that a curriculum can be prescriptive or descriptive. A prescriptive curriculum emphasises the needs of 'what ought' to happen in a curriculum. This includes a plan, an intended programme, or expert opinions about what should be provided in a proposed curriculum (Ellis, 2004, p. 4). Among the definitions offered are the following:

Kelly (2009, p. 12) defines curriculum as 'a whole range of activities which teachers plan and execute with deliberate reasons and intentions'. In the same vein, Richards (2013, p. 6) refers to a curriculum as the 'overall plan or design for a course and how the content for a course is transformed into a blueprint for teaching and learning which enables the desired learning outcomes to be achieved'. Taking the preceding definition, one may view a curriculum as a medical prescription to follow or an instruction manual for setting up a new machine. It is a 'pre-existent artefact; pre-existent in the sense that it is completed, ready to go, and all that is lacking is implementation' (Ellis, 2004, p. 5).

Descriptive definitions, on the other hand, look at what is actually happening in the classroom when the planned curriculum is enacted (Ellis, 2004). These definitions go beyond the prescriptive views as they encourage thinking about the curriculum in action 'not merely in terms of how things ought to be … but how things are in real classrooms' (ibid., p. 5). The key term that could best define the descriptive curriculum is "experience". According to Portelli (1987, p. 359), defining curriculum in terms of 'experiences … arose as a reaction to the traditional approach to the definition of curriculum as content'. In other words, the

traditional views of curriculum were criticised on the grounds that they did not consider learners, with the emphasis placed instead on the subject matter. In contrast, descriptive curricula viewed learners as individuals who are given the required experiences under the guidance of the school (ibid.). The concept of an "experienced" curriculum is thus meant to provide 'glimpses of the curriculum in action' (Ellis, 2004, p. 5).

Among the several descriptive definitions is one offered by Hass (1987, cited in Ellis, 2004, p. 5), who refers to curriculum as '[t]he set of actual experiences and perceptions of the experiences that each individual learner has of his or her program of education'. Brown (2006, p. 778) views curriculum as all students' school experiences in relation to the improvement of 'skills and strategies in thinking critically and creatively, solving problems, working collaboratively with others, communicating well, writing more effectively, reading more analytically, and conducting research to solve problems'. Similarly, Silva (2009, p. 630) views curriculum in the 21st century as 'an emphasis on what students can do with knowledge, rather than what units of knowledge they have'. Such views suggest that priority is given to students' needs through a deep analysis and understanding of how the set curriculum is being experienced in real classrooms.

Discussions of the above definitions provide useful insights into the drivers of the 2000 English language curriculum reform in Libya. Before the introduction of the English language curriculum in 2000, all language education was based on the understanding that effective language learning can be best achieved by selecting materials that language experts and curriculum developers think learners should learn. Such traditional views were challenged by other philosophical and political views about language education. As the world is developing rapidly, it seems that language education in Libya is also changing to meet the need for English language competency in order to keep pace with such developments (Aloreibi and Carey, 2017). This has led the country to move from a prescriptive to a more interactive English language curriculum so as to achieve the desired objectives.

Although the multiplicity of definitions suggests that there is no consensus regarding what a good curriculum consists of, the process of curriculum making is more likely influenced by the ideologies held by those involved. Eisner and Vallance (1974) and Schiro (2013) referred to this as curriculum ideologies. Schiro (2013, p. 8) provides a clear definition for the term "ideology", defining it as a 'collection of ideas, a comprehensive vision, a way of looking at things, or a worldview that embodies the way a person or a group of people believes the

world should be organised and function'. In other words, people may hold different visions and beliefs about the nature of the curriculum – and about education in general – and this will impact how they think it should be constructed and implemented.

It is therefore useful to discuss the different ideologies behind the construction of curricula because many educational reforms are based predominantly on one or other curriculum ideology. Once we know about these ideologies, we can reach a clearer understanding of the intentions and objectives of these ideologies. More importantly, understanding these ideologies can help us know whether these ideologies and their underlying intentions and objectives might go against the realities of the target context for which the proposed curriculum is constructed. There are various terms associated with the idea of curriculum, including "curriculum vision", "culture", "ideology", "philosophy" and "conception". In this paper, the terms "curriculum ideology" and "curriculum philosophy" will be used interchangeably.

## 2.3 Curriculum Ideologies

Schiro (2013) categorises four ideologies of curriculum: the scholar academic ideology, the social efficiency ideology, the learner-centred ideology, and the social reconstruction ideology. In curriculum making, some ideologies are employed rather than others. According to Schiro (2013), US education has been greatly influenced by apparently conflicting curriculum ideologies. These conflicting ideologies have led to a debate among scholars and the public, with disagreements about what school curricula aim to achieve (Schiro, 2013). This seems to be a common feature in other countries, too, like in the United Kingdom, where many modifications have been made to all aspects of education based on different curriculum ideologies (Kelly, 2009).

Schiro (2013) suggests that the lack of consensus about the nature of curriculum and the ways in which it can be taught has made scholars, educators, and the public concerned about what is actually taking place in the field of curriculum and in their children and grandchildren's schooling. One could argue that not being able to reach an agreement on one philosophy of curriculum construction to encompass the different views about curriculum might make the 'systematic improvement of the curriculum difficult' (ibid., p. 1). Thus, it is important to appreciate the different discourses about curriculum, listen to the various voices, and appreciate how these voices can shape curriculum (Joseph, 2011).

Curriculum ideologies have historical groundings and have been given a variety of names. In the last ten decades, the learner-centred philosophy has variously been known as “progressive education”, “open education”, “child-centred education”, “developmentally appropriate practice” and “constructivism” (Schiro, 2013, p. 2). For many educators, it can be difficult to decide what a curriculum should involve. In this respect, curriculum ideologies can present a framework for people who are interested in the field of curriculum to understand and develop their own thinking (Joseph, 2011). Moreover, understanding the existing philosophical consideration of curriculum can help educators who are developing their own curricula achieve the objectives of their curricula based on an adequate understanding of the various conflicting visions in the field (Schiro, 2013). Eisner and Vallance (1974, pp. 1-2) argued that professional educators need to understand that:

> controversy in education discourse most often reflects basic conflict in priorities concerning the form and content of curriculum and the goals toward which school should strive; the intensity of the conflict and the apparent difficulty in resolving it can most often be traded to a failure to recognise conflicting conceptions of curriculum. Public educational discourse frequently does not bother to examine its conceptual underpinning.

Understanding and appreciating the nature of curriculum enables educators to accept other curriculum planners’ thoughts and to work with them effectively (Schiro, 2013).

The following sections will discuss the four major ideologies suggested by Schiro (2013) that may allow different curricula to be compared and contrasted in relation to their underlying philosophies, as these ideologies relate to the underpinning beliefs about the purpose of education and the individuals for whom a curriculum is designed. Table 4 below compares the various curriculum ideologies (see Schiro, 2013).

**Table 4:** A comparison of curriculum ideologies

| Curriculum ideologies | Aim of the subject | Instructional process | The student's role | The teacher's role |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scholar academic ideology | Acquiring content knowledge – previous conceptions of the disciplines. | Transmissive/ knowledge direct transmission | Receptive/no participatory role | Transmitter |
| Social efficiency ideology | Behaviourist to achieve societal needs | Transmissive/ knowledge direct transmission | Active engagement | Supervisor |
| Student-centred ideology | Personal liberation and development | Activity-based/ descriptive format to encourage independent learning | Independent learner/Active engagement | Facilitator |
| Social reconstruction ideology | Behaviourist to tackle societal illness | Transmissive/ knowledge direct transmission | Active engagement | Colleague |

### 2.3.1 Scholar Academic Ideology

Advocates of Scholar Academic Ideology emphasise that the structure of the curriculum should be based on previous conceptions of the disciplines, 'the investigated subject-matter of that discipline' (Eisner and Vallance, 1974, p. 166). These conceptions then work for students as a tool guiding them to acquire knowledge from great scholars from past generations (Yeung, 2012).

Scholar Academic Ideology aims to enable children to acquire the knowledge that has been created by the greatest people so that in future they might become field experts and great members of society (Eisner and Vallance, 1974). Moreover, it encourages students to 'acquire core cultural knowledge, traditions and values from the dominant culture's exemplary moral, intellectual, spiritual and artistic resources as guidelines for living'(Joseph, 2011, p. 19), and thus students are expected to act like scientists who will add additional valuable data to the existing accumulated knowledge (Yeung, 2012).

The major role of teachers in achieving the aims of Scholar Academic ideology is to construct a curriculum which takes into account the principles and visions of this ideology and then transmit the culturally constructed knowledge to their students (Schiro, 2013).

Teachers are expected to be competent and provide systematic plans of what is considered appropriate to develop students' discovery, as well as contribute knowledge to the discipline (Yeung, 2012). However, this is not an easy task for teachers as they must first be experts in the disciplines for which the proposed curriculum is constructed (Schiro, 2013).

The product of Scholar Academic Ideology is a teacher-centred curriculum (where teachers are seen as the knowledge holders and their role is to pass this knowledge down to their students), as that is believed to be the most beneficial kind of curriculum for children's education. However, an inability to consider different visions and beliefs about how a curriculum should be can complicate the process of designing one that incorporates systematic curriculum improvement (Schiro, 2013).

### 2.3.2 Social Efficiency Ideology

In 1913, Franklin Bobbitt (cited in Schiro, 2013) was the first to mark the birth of Social Efficiency Ideology by emphasising that curriculum workers need to use a scientific approach to production similar to the one developed by industry. Five years later, Bobbitt (ibid., p. 57) stated that the educational 'task preceding all others is the determination of…a scientific technique of curriculum design'. Bobbitt described the ideology as a scientific technique based on his central theory that human life, although varied, comprises certain activities and, in this sense, the role of education is to prepare for these certain activities through the investigation of 'abilities, attitudes, habits, appreciations, and forms of knowledge that [people] need'.

Advocates of Social Efficiency Ideology view the curriculum as the means by which behavioural ends are taught by effectively organising learning experiences so that curriculum objectives are achieved efficiently (Yeung, 2012). For this reason, the ideology is called a behavioural approach. The purpose of the behavioural curriculum is to develop effective procedures to achieve predefined behavioural objectives.

The role of educators within this ideology is to determine what skills and competencies are required in order to develop an appropriate curriculum. This can be accomplished by determining the societal needs that educators aim to meet. Schiro (2013, p. 5) refers to the fulfilment of societal needs as 'the terminal objectives of the curriculum'; that is, the destination at which the curriculum arrives when all objectives have been achieved.

To educate students to acquire the prescribed knowledge stated in their curriculum, teachers' major role is to employ educational techniques which are guided by carefully selected behavioural objectives (Schiro, 2013). For example, preparation for adult life can be provided through appropriate learning experiences that will help young children in the future (ibid.).

### 2.3.3 Learner-Centred Ideology

In contrast to the two previous ideologies, advocates of Learner-Centred Ideology believe that children are central to education (Eisner and Vallance, 1974, Yeung, 2012, Schiro, 2013). It has been argued that the primary goal of education is the 'growth of individuals, each with harmony with his or her unique intellectual, social, emotional, and physical attributes' (Schiro, 2013, p. 5).

Subscribers to this ideology think of schools as enjoyable environments in which individuals acquire knowledge 'according to their innate natures' (Schiro, 2013, p. 5). In this view, a good curriculum is considered to be one that promotes 'personal liberation and development' (Eisner and Vallance, 1974, p. 9). In other words, the primary focus of education is on helping learners learn independently, as well as on helping them discover things for themselves using their innate capabilities (Yeung, 2012) that exist 'naturally or by heredity rather than being learned through experience' (The Free Dictionary, 2018). For example, the talents of painters, poets and singers might be innate powers, with the knowledge and skills required to an activity already possessed at birth.

Child-Centred ideologists demand that schooling should investigate the personal educational dimension of children. In Eisner and Vallance's (1974, pp. 9-10) words, schooling, through the curriculum, should enter fully a child's life so that the curriculum becomes 'better orchestrated to fulfil its potential as a liberating process by providing integrated experience'. Hence, curriculum is viewed as system of integrated experiences which are thought to provide individual learners with the 'natural experiences that enable a learner to discover himself or herself with personal autonomy' (Yeung, 2012, p. 17-18).

The role of teachers and curriculum workers is to help learners to discover their innate abilities for learning (Eisner and Vallance, 1974). Teachers are viewed as curriculum planners, facilitators or advisors who encourage their learners to construct knowledge (Schiro, 2013). More importantly, teachers are thought to create 'contexts, environments, or curricula

that stimulate growth in the learners as they construct meaning, learning, and knowledge for themselves' (Yeung, 2012, p. 20).

### 2.3.4 Social Reconstruction Ideology

The major concern of advocates of Social Reconstruction Ideology is society itself. The word "reconstruction" here is important as it reflects the essence of this ideology. Social reconstructionists consider society to be problematic and see injustice in the inequalities in the social and economic conditions of society's members (Schiro, 2013). Social Reconstruction Ideology is very much concerned with the societal needs rather than with individual needs. This means that the goal of education is to tackle issues and contribute to creating a good and less problematic society (Eisner and Vallance, 1974). From this viewpoint, it is believed that societal problems such as racism, sexism, pollution and illiteracy can be tackled by teaching about serious social and economic inequality within a society and by working towards developing a better society by reconstructing it so that it becomes more just, equal and democratic (Joseph, 2011, Schiro, 2013).

Social reconstructionists view education as the right process for fighting society's ills. This can be done 'through the medium of curriculum, to educate "the masses of humanity" to critically analyse themselves in relation to their society, understand the ills of their society, develop a vision of a better world based on a conception of social justice, and actualize that vision' (Schiro 2008, p. 133). Therefore, social reconstructionism stresses the important roles that schools and teachers play in serving as agents of social change (Eisner and Vallance, 1974, Reed and Davis, 1999, Stern and Riley, 2001, McKernan, 2013).

What curricula should include and what objectives they should achieve is debated across the world. However, there is relatively little discussion of what curricula should entail in less-developed countries. As different countries may have different educational objectives, the decisions taken in curriculum making depend on the particular educational needs of each society. Nevertheless, the ideologies discussed above appear to affect the choices of curriculum making globally. This is the case in Libya, where Scholar Academic Ideology was adopted in the old English curriculum and Learner-Centred Ideology was adopted in the present one. These ideologies might be rejected if they fail to achieve their intended objectives.

Nevertheless, curriculum ideologies can still inform curriculum makers interested in the current views and conflicts about the construction of curriculum. Armed with sufficient knowledge about these different curricular visions, people can reflect on these ideologies critically in terms of their adequacy, appropriateness and efficiency. The conflicting views regarding these ideologies are neither wrong nor right, as one ideology can work for a certain nation but not for another (Apple, 2004). Despite the fierce conflict among the holders of these ideologies, it is still important for people who are interested in the field of curriculum to appreciate the different visions within the field, as ignoring their underlying principles and beliefs can affect systematic curriculum development (Schiro, 2013). One important emerging aspect of understanding curriculum ideologies, especially the ones that are theoretically grounded, is that they enable curriculum makers to develop and reform curricula according to their knowledge about the field. For example, in developed countries, Student-Centred Ideology seems to be the most influential one because it has gained its strength from the social constructivism theory discussed in Section 2.1.1. This might imply that other non-theoretically based curriculum ideologies are less likely to be employed or are more likely to be changed if already employed. Moreover, people, especially academics, may tend towards certain curriculum ideologies. Farahani and Maleki (2014), for example, investigated the tendency towards the four curriculum ideologies discussed above among academic board members in educational science faculties in Iran. They concluded that the majority of their participants advocated Learner-Centred Ideology. The authors stated that the reason for favouring Learner-Centred Ideology over the other three ideologies had to do with the fact that their research participants were all involved in educational fields at universities, especially those coming from humanities; thus, they might have stronger beliefs about interactive and cooperative learning.

In the Libyan context, it is particularly important to discuss the curriculum ideologies highlighted in the previous section because the country's curriculum reform, particularly its English language education reform, has changed the focus from Scholar Academic Ideology to a more theoretically based student-centred language education. However, the change has raised a lot of pedagogical and implementation-related challenges (Orafi and Borg, 2009). Some of these challenges relate to the lack of supportive tools to support teachers' 'activity' (teaching), and others relate to mental processes (Engeström, 2001) (pedagogical beliefs) that Libyan teachers bring to their teaching, which all seem to influence their uptake and implementation of the present English language curriculum.

The following section will discuss the idea of curriculum reform and development and its relationship with the current debate. It will explore the advantages and disadvantages of educational reform, particularly in different international milieus. This discussion will also inform the current arguments around this area of research.

## 2.4 Curriculum Development and Reform

The foundations and principles of curriculum development are largely influenced by our understanding of the curriculum models that are available within the field of curriculum studies (Marsh, 2009). Ornstein and Hunkins (2016) describe curriculum development as a process by which curriculum planners endeavour to produce a product that can be effectively implemented. In this process, they attempt to map out the objectives and the means by which these objectives will be achieved, including the teaching approaches and the means by which these approaches are evaluated (O'Neill, 2010a). Ornstein and Hunkins (2016) argue that if teachers' perceptions are not addressed prior to mapping out the objectives of the curriculum, it will be difficult for teachers to implement that curriculum. Thus, curriculum models are not a recipe and should not be used as an alternative to using professional and personal judgment regarding what are the most apt approaches to enhancing student learning (Warren, 2016).

There are two commonly described curriculum models, referred to by many authors as the "Product Model" and the "Process Model" (Marsh, 2009, O'Neill, 2010b, Warren, 2016). Warren (2016, p. 20), for example, in his discussion of higher education curricula, describes the two models as follows:

- "Product" or rational models propose a step-by-step, outcomes-led approach, aimed at yielding coherent curriculum plans and efficient delivery of education;
- "Process" models focus more on students' experience and activities to engage them in meaningful learning.

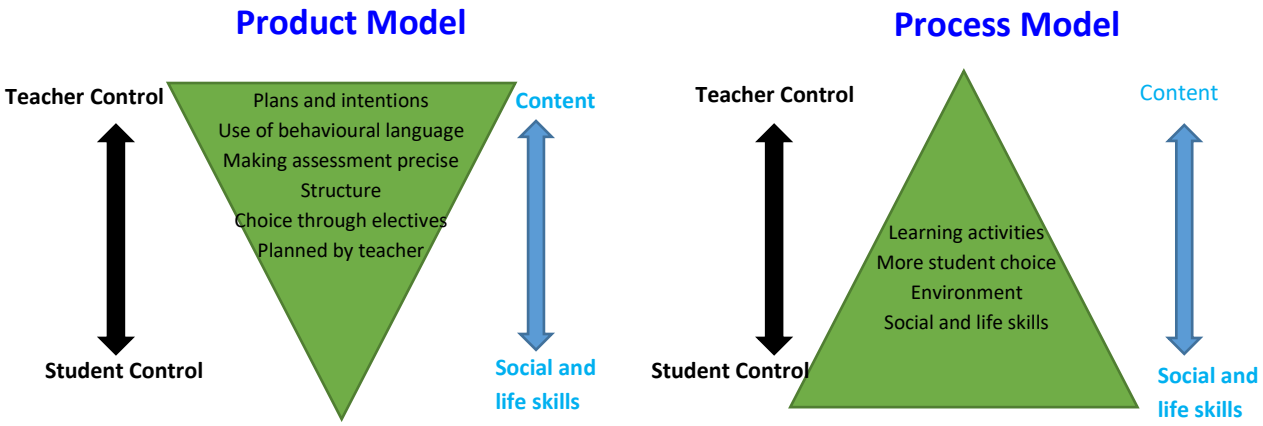



**Figure 4:** The Product and Process Models of curriculum development adapted from O'Neill (2010b, p. 2)

### 2.4.1 The Product Model

According to O'Neill (2010a), the product model originates from the work of Tyler (1949), who significantly influenced curriculum development in the US. The model is considered a valuable tool which 'facilitates communication of what is intended and therefore leads to more purposeful learning' (Sheehan, 1986, p. 673). Advocates of the Product Model assume that learners have deficiencies in knowledge acquisition. It is problems in literacy and numeracy that educators, through curricula, aim to resolve. The Product Model is aimed at presenting the curriculum in a way that achieves end-objectives. For example, a curriculum based on the Product Model includes 'knowledge of certain facts, mastery of specific skills and competencies, and acquisition of certain "appropriate" attitudes and values' (ibid., p. 672).

Marsh (2009, p. 31) states that the Product Model is useful in many ways. For example, it is generalisable. Moreover, it provides simple teaching procedures that can be simply applied to achieve intended outcomes. When the model was first published in 1940s, it 'broke new ground by emphasising "student behaviours" and "learning experiences". Finally, the model was seen as more comprehensive than other models at that time.

According to Tyler (1949), knowing what learners' educational needs are, as well as what curriculum makers and society think of as knowledge worth teaching, can help suggest the

objectives of the curriculum being developed. Tyler (1949) holds that learning experiences must be relevant to learners so that they become able to complete these learning experiences successfully. To further help attain the suggested objectives, the learning experience must be satisfactory for learners. These learning experiences should be organised in such a way as to meet the previously suggested objectives. In other words, a learning experience 'should be organised for precisely the same general reason that it was selected in the first place: as a means of helping students reach certain ends (the previously specified objectives)' (Kelly, 2009, p. 31). Evaluation of students' learning experiences can be achieved by gathering evidence about what students have actually learned and whether the selected objectives have been met. This suggests that creative assessment procedures such as observation (teachers record and assess what they are seeing) are required to replace the ordinary knowledge-based tests (Tyler, 1949).

From the preceding discussion, it can be seen that the foundations of the Product Model are built on behavioural objectives. In other words, the intended outcome or the product of a learning experience is prescribed beforehand. In Libya's previous English language curriculum, the intended outcome was to correct students' reading and grammar deficiencies and to provide knowledge of certain facts about life in the country. This suggests that previous curriculum planners in Libya seem to have believed in the assumptions promoting the Product Model of curriculum development as a useful model for language curriculum development.

However, the Product Model has been criticised for its 'over emphasis on learning objectives and … viewed as employing very technical, means-to-end reasoning' (O'Neill, 2010b, p. 2). Moreover, many curriculum developments have been criticised for being entirely controlled by political powers. For example, the National Curriculum in England was criticised for the government control exerted over the curriculum contents and teaching methodologies (Priestley and Biesta, 2013). Another strong point of contention is that educational outcomes are often unpredictable and are therefore impossible to specify beforehand. Similarly, behavioural objectives can be so numerous that a teacher might spend more time writing them than teaching (Eisner, 1994).

To summarise, in this behaviourist approach, the teacher at the centre of the educational process is, to a significant extent, considered a controller and provider of knowledge. What is

to be learned by students is predetermined by others who are involved in the making of materials and it is the students' role to accommodate the received knowledge.

### 2.4.2 The Process Model

The Process Model describes an alternative conceptualisation of what a curriculum might look like. The important key features of the Process Model are explained by Knight (2001, pp. 376-377) and Warren (2016, p. 23), and can be summarised as follows:

- The model takes learning processes to be the proper concern of curriculum.
- The model gives teachers the opportunity to think about 'good learning activities for engaging students with the subject, and then orchestrating these through mapping the learning processes across the set of modules that make up the programme' (Warren 2016, p. 23).

In these views, the Process Model is thus dynamic in nature and focuses on the interactional relationship between teachers and learners (Ord, 2016). Such relationships can provide learners with a variety of learning experiences which they can negotiate by themselves (Fraser and Bosanquet, 2006, Ord, 2016). Within this model, learners' voices are heard, as they are encouraged to interact with their teachers and are no longer considered as consumers of a product; rather, they are seen as active individuals who are constructing knowledge independently and in collaboration with others (Stenhouse, 1975). Considering the specific case of English language education in Libya, the current curriculum embodies what this process model is all about. The present English language curriculum is based essentially on experiential learning, meaning making and collaborative work.

There have been certain criticisms made of the Process Model. According to Walker (1990), a curriculum based on this model is difficult to assess, especially when we take into consideration the examination system that can override the intended assessment procedures. In relation to this research study, the examination system in Libyan schools, especially for evaluating English language proficiency, is a subject-based, traditional examination. With the influence of school culture (a mediating cultural factor (Engeström, 2001), assessing learners' progress using this model can be time consuming as it involves testing to ensure effectiveness. Thus, it requires significant effort and financial support to come up with effective assessment procedures. If insufficient support is provided, assessing learners' achievements may not be easy and teachers will eventually be limited to using whatever assessment procedures are

available to them. This, however, does not imply that the model cannot lead to learners being adequately examined, but it does imply that examinations must consider other dimensions, such as low-achieving students. If formal assessment is a 'by-product there is an implication that the quality the student shows in it must be an under-estimate of his real quality. It is hence rather difficult to get the low-achieving student through an examination using a process model' (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 95).

Another drawback of the Process Model is that it is dependent on the quality of teachers. In other words, if teachers are not well enough prepared to put the model into practice effectively, such as in the case of English language teachers in Libya, where teachers are required to teach a process-based English language curriculum (Orafi and Borg, 2009), students can encounter difficulties in understanding what their teachers are trying to do. Let us consider the teacher-student relationship, which seems to be crucial in motivating students to carry out activities and to enhance their learning experiences. Such a relationship requires a qualified teacher who has enough experience to establish successful relationships (Luz, 2015).

It seems, however, that none of the criticisms mentioned above are either theoretical or intellectual in relation to the cognitive dimensions of the model. Instead, as Kelly (2009, p. 107) puts it, they take the form 'of putting it down, rubbishing it, especially by describing it as outmoded "old hat."'.

The issue around the product and process model is widely recognised. One investigation into the issues around the two models, for example, is made by Sheehan (1986) who clearly explained the strengths and weakness of the two models. But more importantly, he clearly explained the key factor behind choosing one of the two models for curriculum development. He stated that although there is debate around which model is best for curriculum development, the choice of one of these two are heavily dependent on the "values of the chooser as much as on anything else" (p. 678).

In summary, the models of curriculum discussed above yield two ways of looking at curriculum in general: the traditional (product) and the progressive (process) perspectives. Advocates of the traditional perspective view curriculum as a collection of subjects prescribed in rigid syllabuses accompanied by teacher guidebooks. Advocates of the progressive perspective, by contrast, argue that a curriculum should include the total learning experiences and reflections of the individual, rather than just suggesting a list of school

subjects (Baldacchino, 2014, Quay and Seaman, 2013). This contrasts with the prescribed knowledge set out in rigid syllabuses. Although process-based education is becoming more dominant around the world, the model seems to present numerous challenges, especially when it relates to English language teaching. In relation to this research, the issues associated with the Process Model can help understand and explain the issues associated with implementing and developing the present English language curriculum.

With particular reference to this study, It is important to discuss the curriculum models because the English language curriculum reform in Libya, which is being examined, changed the curriculum radically from being a product, teacher-centred model (depicting a Scholar Academic Ideology) to a more process, student-centred model. At the same time, however, curriculum, learning and teaching in other curricular areas remained within the traditional approach. The implications of this will be considered in more depth in Chapter 7.

### 2.4.3 Curriculum Development

Curriculum development is largely based on key drivers that guide the intended change. Neary (2002) suggests that the emphasis on the contents of curriculum has shifted with the various changes within education. One key and general driver for many curriculum developers across the world, for example, is recognition of the fast technological change which requires knowledge and new skills to be acquired to keep up with the rapidly changing world (Dello-Iacovo, 2009, Education Scotland, 2016).This takes us back to the notion of process-based/progressive education which largely concerns the acquisition of the new skills required for today's societies. Hence, a shift from the product/objective-based curriculum development to a more process-based education was necessary. In practice, however, it can be very difficult to make the shift in contexts where there is a lack of the essential preparations and requirements to bring about such educational change. A prime example is the way that curriculum has changed in Scotland. A large part of the previous objectives-based curriculum, implemented in 1990, known as the 5-14 Curriculum, was not embedded as it arguably 'failed to start where the teachers are' (Swann and Brown, 1997, p. 91). According to Swann and Brown (1997), there were issues with Scotland's 5-14 Curriculum that are methodological and substantive in nature. From the methodological side, the curriculum failed to access teachers' classroom thinking and views about teaching. The authors argue that teachers had no chance to express their views about the curriculum and its objectives. The substantive issues are depicted in the way the "objectives-based" curriculum

was entirely internalised by the teachers. As these objectives need to be attained by teachers, they (the teachers) tend to subsume them 'into their customary ways of constructing their classroom teaching and their pupils' (ibid., p. 91).

A major reaction to the prescriptive 5-14 Curriculum was the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) from 2004 onwards, which represented a major shift from a product-based to a process-based/progressive curriculum (Priestley and Biesta, 2013). The emergent curriculum was based far more on a child-centred approach. The goal of the curriculum was to enable children (aged 3-18) to become 'successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society' (ibid., p. 35). Teachers' roles were changed from knowledge imparters to knowledge negotiators, from learning leaders to learning facilitators. More importantly, the new curriculum encourages teachers to play their roles in the development of curricula. It places 'the teacher at the forefront of curriculum development, heralding an apparent [re]turn to teacher autonomy and teacher agency in curriculum-making' (ibid., p. 3).

Although CfE has been the most significant educational development in Scotland in recent years, its implementation was not an easy task for teachers. The aspirations for the CfE seem to have been incongruent with teachers' conceptions about knowledge in general and their conceptions about teaching and learning in particular, which harboured 'implicit transmissionist views of knowledge and learning' (Priestley and Minty, 2013, p. 16). Furthermore, the CfE seemed to be unclear for many teachers, which led different teachers to understand the CfE in different ways (ibid.). For example, several primary and secondary teachers thought that the CfE was about new teaching methodologies, while many others thought that the focus of the CfE was mainly on content (ibid.). According to Priestley and Minty (2013), this led many teachers to describe the curriculum as woolly as it was unclear in terms of how new teaching methods could be employed. Subsequently, this left teachers at that time 'flounder[ing] in the dark' and many felt that they were not ready to 'shift from prescription to autonomy' (ibid., pp. 15-16)

Despite its challenges, the philosophy of progressive or process-based education has been employed in many countries (See for example, Zhang and Liu, 2014, So and Kang, 2014, Hong and Vargas, 2015). This implies that the philosophy of progressive education has been widely recognised and that it has spread to different parts of the world. Many countries have attempted to organise their systems to prepare their students to be employable in a fast-

changing and competitive economic environment (Yates and Young, 2010). Amongst the examples of a successful implementation of curriculum reform based on progressive views of education is the case of Hong Kong. In 2000, a major curriculum reform was performed by the Curriculum Development Council of Hong Kong entitled Learning to Learn, which focused on preparing capable citizens for their industrialised country. More recently, Jenkins and Agamba (2013) observe that teachers in the US have successfully implemented (with the support of professional development programmes) the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) curriculum. This curriculum was developed by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and endorsed by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in Columbia.

However, research studies have also reported serious challenges emerging with respect to curriculum reform initiatives, particularly with reforms based on progressive views of education. These are discussed in more detail in Section 3.9. It can also be argued that teachers should be considered as important change agents and that their role in the process of curriculum reform and implementation is very important (Van der Heijden et al., 2015). Therefore, the next section will discuss the role of teachers in curriculum reforms and implementation.

### 2.4.4 The Role of Teachers in Curriculum Reform and Implementation

Teachers have been viewed as important individuals in reform implementation (Glatthorn et al., 2009, Kopweh, 2014). Research studies have suggested that teachers are seen as 'key players' and change agents (Van der Heijden et al., 2015), and 'instruments of change' (Karavas-Doukas, 1995). It is clear that teachers play a vital role as it is they who put educational change into practice. Therefore, marginalising the essential role that teachers can play in the process of reform implementation can have an impact on the overall success of the introduced curricular reform (Fullan, 2007).

According to Glatthorn et al. (2009), teachers should also be involved in the reform process as they are important individuals who translate the content and methods into action. This suggests that the success of curriculum reform is largely dependent on teachers' involvement in the development process. Moreover, Kopweh (2014, p. 66) contends that reforms should also 'involve the community or rather families living around the school. Often these are the

ones that send their children to the school and with positive expectations at the end of the primary or secondary cycle'.

However, despite the important, albeit theoretical, role that has been given to teachers in curriculum reform and implementation, teachers, in many different milieus, tend to receive little or none of the support that is necessary for them to achieve successful implementation of the reform (Gray, 1999, Elmas et al., 2014). Similarly, Van der Heijden et al. (2015) state that it is of vital importance to 'create supportive school contexts in which teachers are encouraged to be agentic in order to influence positively or change their education, and to learn and develop themselves both individually and with their colleagues' (p. 682). Hence, it is important for curriculum reformers to support teachers to become able to accomplish the "activity" (Engeström, 2001) and achieve its objectives, that is, the effective implementation of the reform. One highly recommended way to support teachers to become successful implementers of curricular reforms is the provision of professional development. The following section discusses teacher professional development in more depth.

### 2.4.5 Reform-Oriented Professional Development

It is generally agreed that teacher professional development (henceforth, PD) is essential to bring about teachers' willingness and readiness to accept and implement change (Kennedy, 2005, Anderson, 2010, Wilson, 2013, Guskey, 2002)). Without sufficient support given to teachers through a series of teacher professional development programmes, they may encounter serious difficulties in putting educational reform into practice. Anderson (2010, p. 67) argues that if teachers are left with no supportive tools to bring about successful implementation of a reform, they may 'experience unresolved personal and management concerns that can lead to frustration, resistance, or even abandonment of the change'. Similarly, Kennedy (1996) emphasises the important role that PD plays in supporting teachers to adopt and implement curricular reforms. He maintains that teachers can be encouraged to implement the change effectively if relevant resources and adequate support are given.

Many educational reforms in different parts of the world have been very successful. The case of the China 2000 curriculum reform is a good example here, as reported by Hongbiao (2013) in relation to the National Curriculum Reform (NCR). Among the successful factors that enabled teachers to adopt and implement the reform was the provision of PD programmes. A

similar case was reported by Pegg (2013), who notes that the successful implementation of the institutional curriculum reform undertaken by universities in the UK was a result of many contributing factors that fostered the implementation of the reform. According to Pegg (2013), short- and long-term teacher professional development played an essential role in bringing about the intended change.

However, despite an awareness of the key role that PD plays in supporting teachers' implementation of reforms and PD programmes being undertaken in many different contexts, many reform initiatives have failed. It is worth mentioning here the issue of PD support, which many research studies have reported as being inadequate or short (Borko, 2004, Soko, 2014, Cook, 2010)). For example, Cook (2010) explored the factors which inhibited and facilitated Japanese teachers of English in adopting communicative language teaching methodologies. He found that the support programmes provided for teachers were insufficient and ineffective. For professional development activities to be effective, educators and teacher professional development providers need to consider the components that make professional development courses effective.

### 2.4.6 The Components of Effective Professional Development

It has been suggested that teachers' achievement is associated with the effectiveness of the in-service or professional development that they receive (Bayar, 2014, Whitworth and Chiu, 2015, Borg, 2015, Darling-Hammond, 2017). Although PD programmes are provided in many countries, teachers tend to enter the profession unprepared (Junaid and Maka, 2015). This suggests the need to provide structures for effective PD programmes. For this reason, authors of many research studies suggest a list of components to guide effective PD programmes. These components include: 1) being school-based; 2) a consideration of participants' needs; 3) a consideration of schools' needs; 4) teacher participation in the planning of PD programmes; 5) offering practical teaching opportunities; and 6) prolonged engagement (Sandholtz and Scribner, 2006, Starkey et al., 2009, Bayar, 2014, Nishimura, 2014, Cordingley et al., 2015, Whitworth and Chiu, 2015).

School-based PD is deemed important for developing teachers' practice. It is argued that when these programmes take place in the classroom, they allow teachers, through problem-solving sessions focused on the teachers' needs, to identify important resources and strategies which are suitable for meeting their students' needs (Nishimura, 2014).

The consideration of participants' needs is another recommended component of an effective PD programme. It is claimed that when PD activities are made according to teachers' real-life situations, PD activities becomes more effective (Harris et al., 2006, Bayar, 2014). While individual participants will, of course, have particular needs, these needs are defined by the needs surrounding them in their work environments (Cordingley et al., 2015).

Considering schools' needs is another recommended component; in other words, PD programmes should take into account individual school-classroom needs as they may vary from one school to another (Bayar, 2014). Thus, PD programmes should consider the reality of each school, rather than offering the same PD programmes to all schools. It is argued that linking professional development programmes to school needs helps participants see the link between what is being offered in the PD activities and their own classroom situations (Sandholtz and Scribner, 2006, Starkey et al., 2009).

Another important component is teacher involvement in the planning of PD programmes. It can be argued that if teachers have no role in this planning, they may feel isolated from the subject matter and may find the topics irrelevant (Bayar, 2014). Therefore, it is believed that involving teachers in planning PD programmes is a crucial element for effective PD programmes because it helps teachers develop a sense of ownership (Starkey et al., 2009, Whitworth and Chiu, 2015).

The active participation of teachers is also deemed important in strengthening PD programmes. It helps to engage teachers actively during these programmes as they tend to be more willing to learn by doing than by listening to instructors. Starkey et al. (2009) emphasise the importance of providing opportunities for practice. They claim that if enough opportunities for teachers to engage in active participation are provided, the PD programmes will most likely be very effective. Similarly, Bayar (2014) argues that without involving teachers in active participation, teachers will more likely get bored and will not benefit from these activities as much as was hoped.

Teachers' prolonged engagement in PD programmes is another suggested component for effective teacher preparation (Cordingley et al., 2015). Bayar (2014) claims that long-term PD programmes make these programmes even more effective. In turn, short-term PD programmes are thought to be ineffective in terms of keeping teachers up to date with potential changes in teaching practices (Torff and Sessions, 2008, Lauer et al., 2014, Yan and He, 2015).

Overall, the literature suggests that for a change in teaching practices to be effective and for teachers to be able to implement new educational policies, it is very important to provide teachers with supportive "tools" (Engeström, 2001) such as adequate and efficient professional development training. More importantly, these programmes should support teachers continuously, taking into account their needs, so that they become able to overcome future pedagogical challenges (Birman et al., 2000, Masuda et al., 2013, El-Bilawi and Nasser, 2017). However, regardless of the important components suggested for an effective PD programme, the providers of such programmes also have a significant impact on the delivery and success of these programmes (Cordingley et al., 2015).

First of all, the delivery of PD programmes is affected by the nature of the educational system, whether they are centralised or non-centralised systems (Stadler, 2010 cited in Sabah et al., 2014). In non-centralised systems such as in Denmark, one would understand that schools are responsible for organising the PD programmes for teachers, whereas in centralised systems such as in Libya, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the educational authorities organise these programmes (Sabah et al., 2014, Abushina, 2017). Yet, what is worth stressing here is not the educational system that drives PD programmes per se, but the people who deliver the content to participants. In their review on how PD programmes in England's teaching schools have achieved success, Cordingley et al. (2015) report that the success of these PD programmes were also dependent (in addition to the other important components discussed above) on the quality of PD trainers. In these successful programmes, the varied expertise of the trainers had an impact on their effectiveness. The trainers were experts in different areas, with 'knowledge and in-depth knowledge of effective professional development processes, and evaluation and monitoring' (p. 6), and some developed the participants' sense of ownership by giving them a degree of leadership of the PD programmes and by treating them as peers and co-learners. In this relationship, values, understandings, goals and beliefs can be shared with participants not only for the purpose of sharing but also for the purpose of challenging and changing participants' understanding and beliefs about teaching and learning, thereby making PD programmes more effective (ibid.).

To conclude, this chapter has focused on the making and developing of school curricula in light of the ideologies and models on which they are based. The intention was to locate curriculum development and reform in Libya. From the discussion, it was apparent that curriculum has been conceptualised differently. In the past, curriculum makers prescribe content and ways in which content should be delivered, leaving teachers with no choice other

than to follow what has been prescribed for them. A major reaction to this practice has been the idea of progressive education, which regarded the curriculum as the means through which young generations are given the knowledge that they need to become useful citizens. Thus, curricula in general are frequently reformed, and it is important for implementers, mainly teachers, to understand the intentions and approaches that lie behind the reforms and how to implement them. As curricular reform continues, implementers must also be given continuous support to implement what has been reformed. In the terms of CHAT, these would be termed “supportive tools” (Engeström, 2001).

In this chapter, I have stressed the importance of PD and how it can be effective in relation to curriculum development and practice. This discussion is relevant to my research for various reasons. First, as the present English language curriculum in Libya is based on the ideas of progressive education, the discussion of the product and process Models and the criticisms they have faced provides valuable information to help understand the current situation of the present English language curriculum and its challenges. Second, the views of PD will help understand how Libyan English language teachers are supported in relation to the implementation of the curriculum. Finally, the discussion of how PD programmes can be effective will help offer suggestions should deficiencies be identified in the provision of PD.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the relationship between teacher beliefs and curricular reforms. This discussion is important as it points to the tensions between teacher beliefs on the one hand and the intentions of the reformed curriculum on the other.

# Chapter 3: Teachers' Beliefs

## 3.1 Introduction

In the field of education, research suggests that teachers tend to have various beliefs about education such as epistemological beliefs (beliefs about knowledge), beliefs about their learners, beliefs about content (subject matter), beliefs about pedagogy (how to teach), beliefs about teaching and learning and other beliefs about the challenges that they face which affect their teaching such as beliefs about society and moral and ethical issues (Levin, 2015, Schraw and Olafson, 2015). In the language of CHAT, these would be termed 'mental processes' (Engeström, 2001).

Although there is a consensus regarding the important role that teachers' beliefs play in guiding teachers' pedagogical practices (that is, teachers beliefs impact their teaching behaviours, their learners' development, interactions with their learners, and also their decision making), the term "beliefs" seems to be understood differently. Therefore, in the next two sections, the issue of defining the term "beliefs" will be discussed in order to reach a clear understanding of the issue surrounding the term.

## 3.2 Defining "Teachers' Beliefs"

Despite the many attempts that have been made to define the term "beliefs", it has been difficult to establish a commonly agreed definition, since authors tend to conceptualise the term differently (Fives and Buehl, 2012, Zheng, 2015, Cota Grijalva and Ruiz-Esparza Barajas, 2013).

As far as the terminology problem is concerned, the term has been defined variously as "cognition", "knowledge", "conception of teaching", "practical knowledge", "images", "assumptions", "conceptual systems", "dispositions", "implicit theories", "personal theories", "pedagogical knowledge", "practical theories", "theoretical orientations", "attitudes", "conceptions", "values", "opinions", "ideologies", and "perspectives", among other definitions (Sharp et al., 1975, Thompson, 1984, Clark and Peterson, 1986, Goodman, 1988, Pajares, 1992, Borg, 2006, Zheng, 2015). One of the authors who endeavoured to explain the

concept of beliefs was Pajares (1992, p. 316), who concluded that '[t]he construct of educational beliefs is itself broad and encompassing'. According to Pajares (1992, p. 308), it can be very difficult to come to grips with teachers beliefs' without first 'deciding what they wish belief to mean and how this meaning will differ from that of similar constructs'. Pajares' definition of the term, however, is a further indication of its elusiveness, as well as the plurality of meaning associated with this term. Moreover, the term "belief" has been widely used to refer to theories, concepts and images which are viewed as beliefs in disguise (Richardson, 1996, Levin, 2015b).

The difficulty and inconsistency in defining the term "beliefs" can also be explained by the confusion arising from the early attempts to distinguish between beliefs and knowledge (Clandinin and Connelly, 1987, Österholm, 2010). Therefore, understanding the notion of "beliefs" requires us to start by elaborating how beliefs and knowledge can be distinguished, and by researching different contexts and methods of discovering beliefs (Zheng, 2015).

## 3.3 The Relationship Between Knowledge and Beliefs

In the literature, knowledge is viewed as either being intrinsically different from beliefs or adopted as an overarching term, thereby ignoring the distinction between what someone knows and what someone believes. For example, Fenstermacher (1994) contends that knowledge is epistemologically different from beliefs, as knowledge refers to true propositions, whereas beliefs make reference to personal values, which may not include an epistemic aspect.

On the other hand, some researchers claim that knowledge and belief are inseparable, synonymous and interchangeable terms (Pajares, 1992, Murphy and Mason, 2006). For instance, Clandinin and Connelly (1987) argue that it is difficult to identify where knowledge ends and beliefs begin, proposing that the two concepts are merely different in state, and actually make reference to the same thing.

Other researchers also consider beliefs to be a form of knowledge. In general, this form of knowledge is described as personal knowledge (Clark and Peterson, 1986, Kagan, 1992). For instance, Kagan (1992, p. 65) considers beliefs as a 'particularly provocative form of personal knowledge' such as 'implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter to be taught' (ibid. p. 66). She notes that teachers make sense of their

teaching by creating a complex framework of 'unconsciously held assumptions about students classrooms and the academic materials to be taught' (Kagan, 1992, p. 65). In this regard, teachers may hold assumptions about the students' classroom roles or about what content is most useful for students to learn, e.g. the idea that teaching English is a function of teaching English grammar.

Nevertheless, it might still be difficult to differentiate knowledge from beliefs (Zheng, 2015); that is, it is perhaps impossible to judge whether teachers engage with their knowledge or their beliefs when they make classroom decisions. Some researchers argue that both knowledge and beliefs influence a wide variety of cognitive processes, including memory, deduction and induction, problem solving, and comprehension (Pintrich, 1990). In line with such an understanding, Borg (2015, p. 38) concludes that 'aiming to separate knowledge, belief and related concepts is not a particularly fruitful exercise given that in the mind of the teachers these constructs are not held or perceived distinctively'.

With this in mind, it is important to stress that the purpose of this study is not to distinguish between knowledge and beliefs, but, rather, the focus will be on teachers' thinking that underlies their instructional behaviour. In view of this plurality of debates, it is important to clarify my own perspective and use of the term "beliefs". Within the framework of my study, the term "beliefs" has been adopted to refer to 'teachers' psychologically held thinking, conceptions and understanding about EFL teaching and learning' (Zheng, 2015, p.14). Investigating teachers' beliefs in the light of the definition or understanding given above will provide a solid understanding of Libya's English language teachers' perspectives and practice of English language teaching. This implies that studying teachers' knowledge of English teaching is less useful here, as the term "knowledge" has no direct connection to what are believed to be the psychologically or distinctively held assumptions about a phenomenon such as EFL teaching and learning.

## 3.4 The Relationship Between Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviour

Ajzen (1989, p. 241) defines "attitudes" as the 'individual disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event, or to any other discriminable aspect of the individual's world'. This definition gives us to understand that an attitude leads to a certain behaviour, which reflects the characteristics of the attitude held. Beliefs are assumptions and the convictions we hold to be true based on past experiences. Behaviour is

an action or reaction that occurs in response to an event or internal stimuli. Our attitudes towards the behaviour observed will also reflect our judgements. For instance, if a person arrives badly groomed or dressed for an interview, we may assume that he or she did not prepare well for it. However, if instead we believe that it is his or her skills that should be recognised and not the appearances, our different mindset might influence our attitude towards dressing and also influence our behaviour. Behaviours might also be false; people can portray false behaviours when he or she needs some favours or seeks attention from other people. This might also belie an attitude, but the observer needs to differentiate between a true attitude and a false behaviour. According to Ajzen (1989), an attitude comprises three components: "cognition" (cognitive component – essentially, the nature or the formation of beliefs), "affect" (emotional component), and "conation" (behavioural component). Ajzen (2002, p. 668), discussing attitude and behaviour, states that 'the attitude towards behaviour, subjective values of the behaviour perceived' shape an individual's behavioural intentions and behaviours.

Ajzen (1989) added that when beliefs, feelings, and the tendency to behave towards an object, people, or a person are positive or optimistic, the attitude held is also positive. The reverse is also true; negative or pessimistic beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies are likely to lead to a negative attitude. An example which may help to clarify Ajzens' three components of attitude is the following: when someone believes that learning a foreign language such as English is very useful today for connecting to people around the world, doing business, etc (cognition/the cognitive dimension), and he/she feels very excited and motivated to learn it (the affective component), he/she takes action by joining, a well-recognised English language teaching centre (the behavioural component). Having said this, the key indicator of an attitude is the behaviour of that attitude held. Thus, we can see behaviour as an activity or an action that follows an attitude. An English language teacher, for example, may not adopt and implement a teaching approach such as CLT because he/she has negative beliefs about CLT. In this respect, it can be concluded that the relation between attitude and behaviour is mainly captured and influenced by the three components discussed earlier, which also leads to the conclusion that an attitude precedes an action or behaviour.

## 3.5 The Formation of Beliefs: Where Do Beliefs Stem from?

Theorists generally assume that human beliefs are constructed through learning processes, particularly through exposure to others' ideas, e.g. from peers, parents and teachers (Lasley, 1980). Pajares (1992, p. 316) referred to this as a 'process of enculturation and social construction'. According to Van Fleet (1979), human values or beliefs can be created by what he called "cultural transmission". According to Van Fleet (1979, p. 282), cultural transmission includes three important components that contribute to the construction of an individual's beliefs system: enculturation, education and schooling. He defined these concepts as follows:

- Enculturation. A learning process that continues throughout the life of an individual. It not only includes the training he receives at the hands of others, but also the assimilation of elements in his culture that he acquires without direction, through his own powers of observation and by imitation.
- Education. Directed learning, with an ascribed purpose, 'a buffer that polishes the rough surface of untutored behaviour,' can be informal or formal. The function of education is to bring individual behaviour in line with the specific requirements of culture.
- Schooling. The process of teaching and learning carried on at specific times in particular places outside the home, for definite periods, by persons especially prepared for the task.

Van Fleet explained three potential ways by which a person's beliefs are developed. Each recognises not only the source, but also the process involved in the formulation of these beliefs. In constructing a person's belief system, he stressed that both formal and informal learning are important, as is learning intentionally and with a clear purpose and learning that occurs within and outside of a learning institution. In relation to my research, these factors are all recognised, with attention to Libyan teachers' thinking, conceptions, and understanding of EFL teaching and learning processes.

Lasley (1980) maintains that individuals develop beliefs through exposure to the influential ideas of others, such as peers, parents and teachers. It is suggested that these beliefs are acquired and strengthened through schooling, through individuals' observation of others, and through cultural traditions. The acquired beliefs are thought to be persistent, unaltered, and not easy to modify or change (Fullan, 2007), unless challenged by research (Pajares, 1992).

For example, Hovland et al. (1953, cited in Nisbett and Ross, 1980) found that, once created, beliefs are difficult to change even when contradictory evidence to these beliefs subsequently arises. This has been referred to in the literature as "belief perseverance" (Savion, 2009, Espinoza et al., 2017) due to its seemingly stubborn characteristics.

In relation to teachers' educational beliefs, that is, their beliefs about teaching and learning, research on teachers' belief systems suggests that they originate from many different sources. According to Richards and Lockhart (1996, pp. 30-31), ESL teachers' beliefs develop from their experience of being learners themselves. When considering their previous experiences, they tend to reflect on how they received their education. For instance, teachers may think that learning language vocabulary is essential for learning. Arguably, this thinking can extend to their experience as teachers and can influence the way they think about language learning. Teachers' trust in their teaching methods can also develop their belief systems. Teachers may find it useful to know that certain teaching methods work for their students. For example, some teachers find role-play or group work activities enjoyable, while others are more comfortable conducting traditional teacher-based lessons (Farrell, 2014). Taken together, it can be argued that the more teachers find their teaching methods to be effective, the harder it becomes for their beliefs to alter.

To conclude, it can be suggested that early experiences can lead to strongly held beliefs acquired by individuals; thus, 'the earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter, for these beliefs subsequently affect perception and strongly influence the processing of new information' (Pajares, 1992, p. 317). This perhaps explains why such beliefs are resistant to change, even when confronted by contradictory evidence proven to be true (Nisbett and Ross, 1980).

## 3.6 Teachers' Beliefs About Teaching and Learning

Teachers and learners bring their own different expectations about teaching and learning (Richards and Lockhart, 1996). Typically, the beliefs about teaching and learning are classified into two major categories: 'direct transmission of beliefs about learning and instruction' (teacher-centred) and 'constructivist beliefs about learning and instruction' (learner-centred) (Klieme and Vieluf, 2009, p. 92). An appreciation of these two categories could powerfully inform how teachers view their roles and how they further translate a selected category into action within their classroom. While those who view teaching as a

form of direct transmission of beliefs will make an effort to impart lessons in a teacher-centred manner, those who hold constructivist beliefs will consider more the process of learning from the perspectives of the learners.

An influential belief that teachers hold about teaching can be their beliefs about their particular role in the classroom (Richards et al., 1992). This is important to understand since teachers' judgments regarding their students' learning abilities tend to be filtered by these beliefs of their own roles as teachers (Lucas et al., 2015). According to Klieme and Vieluf (2009), teachers holding direct transmission beliefs see their role as being to impart knowledge to students while the students sit quietly and perform activities with great support from their teacher. Teachers who hold constructivist beliefs, by contrast, believe that students should not be considered empty buckets to be filled up with knowledge; rather, they should participate actively in the construction of knowledge. More importantly, constructivist teachers believe that their major role is to support their students. This implies that they place less focus on giving ready-to-consume knowledge and much more on developing students' autonomous learning.

Similarly, Prawat (1992, p. 358) pointed out four important sets of beliefs about teaching and learning that 'influence many aspects of teacher behaviour and which underlie traditional, transmission approaches to teaching and learning'. The most important set which is relevant to my research here (because Libyan teachers were part of a traditional, transmissive approach to English language teaching for a long time) regards teachers' beliefs that learners and content are fixed entities. Teachers holding such beliefs tend to consider learners as static and non-interactive in nature. They believe that for the learning process to be effective, the content of educational programmes should be adjusted to learners' entities. This justifies the great time spent on delivering content rather than on allowing time for students to engage in meaning-making processes.

As teachers are considered important change agents in curriculum reform, teachers' beliefs about curriculum arguably play an essential role in the success or failure of educational reforms. Essentially, teachers' beliefs, about curriculum tend to shape their instructional behaviour (Nespor, 1987, Pajares, 1992). In the language of CHAT, these would be termed as "activity" that needs a configuration in the divided multiple activity systems in which different activity systems share an object (Engeström, 2001). In such activity systems, curriculum developers are strongly advised to take into consideration teachers' beliefs about

curriculum reforms. As previously discussed, it is vital to understand beliefs as they are translated into teachers' appreciation of their roles, their actions, and subsequent classroom behaviours in relation to the learning and teaching process. That is to say that in different contexts, it can be useful for curriculum developers to learn from ineffective reform initiatives. For example, it can be useful to identify and understand the tension between curriculum policy and teacher practice so that remedies can be offered.

## 3.7 Teachers' Beliefs About Curriculum Reform

In connection with the earlier discussion on teachers' beliefs, teachers' perceptions about curriculum reform can likewise affect its implementation (Bantwini, 2010, Zhang and Liu, 2014, Berg et al., 2015). The process of teaching the contents of curriculum passes under teachers' scrutiny (teachers' beliefs) before teachers can put the intended contents, and thus the curriculum, into practice (Prawat, 1992, Richards and Lockhart, 1996). Essentially, teachers' perceptions of curriculum reform are deemed important and play a crucial role in either the implementation or rejection of educational reforms (Berg et al., 2015). For example, an educational reform that attempts to replace long-established and trusted teaching habits with new ones may fail because teachers, such as English language teachers in Libya, may already place great trust in their traditional teacher-based approach. Similarly, Bantwani (2010, p. 89) emphasises that teachers' 'beliefs, values, experiences and daily challenges influence and shape the meanings that the teachers eventually attach to the new reforms, which in turn play a vital role in their acceptance and classroom implementation'. This implies that if their beliefs are so set towards a particular role, e.g. teacher-centred, then, it is likely that even the most rigorous teacher development sessions on learner-centred approaches will do very little to change teachers' firmly held beliefs. This will then have inherent and powerful implications for the expected success of the curricular reform – arguably, even before the implementation of the reform gets underway. Research on teachers' educational beliefs indicates that teachers' beliefs about curriculum reform have hindered curriculum implementation. For example, Raissia and Nor (2013) found that in CLT classrooms, the majority of teachers believed that if students lack the mastery of language sentence structure (accuracy), it will be difficult for them to be fluent English speakers. This demonstrates that teachers bring with them their educational beliefs and use them to interpret their instructional practices in accordance with the curriculum which they are expected to teach (Richards and Lockhart, 1996).

According to Richards and Lockhart (1996), teachers have different interpretations of the teaching duties assigned to them. They can have different views on the planning of a lesson or on the evaluation of students' achievement. Thus, adhering to the instructions and objectives of the intended curriculum reform can be significantly affected by teachers' beliefs about the curriculum. Moreover, teachers' beliefs about issues derived from the curriculum reform can also hinder their implementation of the reform. Richards and Lockhart (1996), for example, reported teachers' feelings and expressions about the programme that they taught in a particular institution. The teachers made observations such as "no collaborative work among teachers", "working in isolation", "not much understanding of the philosophical views of the programme", "very few teachers' meetings to reflect on the programme" and "traditional assessment procedures", none of which are in line with the philosophy of a communicative approach. As a consequence, this tends to hinder teachers' implementation of the new programme.

Many curriculum reforms are based on certain educational philosophies, such as the 2000 English language curriculum reform in Libya, which is based on the constructivist views of education. In this regard, Libyan teachers' beliefs can 'exert a strong influence on teachers' pedagogical decisions, instructional practices, and professional development' (Zhang and Liu, 2014, p. 188). Therefore, it is essential for curriculum reformers to investigate the beliefs that teachers hold about curriculum reforms. Berg et al. (2015, p. 68) suggest that a successful implementation and realisation of curriculum reform needs to 'reflect a general attitude of the teachers that changes are necessary or desirable'. This suggests that if teachers' beliefs are taken into account by curriculum reformers, then educational reforms are more likely to be adopted and implemented by teachers (Ertmer et al., 2012).

At the same time, what can bring about the successful implementation of curriculum reform is largely dependent on the various factors that have been already mentioned. Teachers' beliefs regarding change, examination systems, supportive preparations, workplace conditions, and unexpected student behaviours and attitudes towards learning can all represent inhibiting factors to successful implementation. This makes the success of curricular reform highly challenging! Arguably, curriculum developers have very little option but to take into account these personal and contextual realities in a serious effort to bring about successful curriculum change.

## 3.8 Teacher Education and Curriculum Reform

Teacher education is defined as the policies, procedures and support given to equip 'student teachers with a set of competencies, which might be idiosyncratic and context specific to cope with the complexity of challenges in their everyday teaching work' (Cheng et al., 2010, p. 91). Teachers bring to their classrooms their conceptions about teaching, and these are difficult to change. These conceptions were created either by their exposure to a particular teaching model or by modelling their teachers' teaching when they were students themselves (Burns and Shadoian-Gersing, 2010). It is generally believed that providing pre-service teachers with teacher education programmes will change teachers' conceptions of teaching. In relation to my research, Libyan English language teachers seem to have received very little, if any, education programmes in relation to learner-centred education. As the present English language curriculum puts the learner at the centre of the educational process, implementing the curriculum can be a daunting experience for Libyan teachers.

Teacher education programmes are regarded as very important for achieving the desired educational outcomes (Loughran and Hamilton, 2016). However, it is argued that teacher education programmes should not be organised merely to fulfil the prescribed objectives made by curriculum developers, but also, and more importantly, they should be organised in such a way that they can lead to a change in teachers' beliefs and classroom behaviour (Tam, 2015). One possible way to achieve the latter goal is to involve teachers in a learning community, which gives them the opportunity to engage in activities aimed at changing their beliefs. A good example of this is the recent study carried out by Tam (2017, pp. 22-38), who suggests that a well-developed professional learning community (PLC) is characterised by a 'paradigm shift away from traditional teacher development … to lifelong professional learning in the workplace where teachers share their expertise within a community'. In Tam's study, the teachers' participation in the study appears to have played a key role in bringing about a genuine change in them. She found that features such as 'a coherent structure, collaborative culture, and effective learning activities' contributed to a successful PLC programme. This study exemplifies the fact that teacher education programmes can be effective when teachers are given enough time to change their attitudes about their behaviour (Varcoe and Boyle, 2014).

### 3.8.1 Teacher Education in Higher Education

In many milieus, student teachers in higher education tend to have insufficient information to support their future pedagogical practices (da Silva Vieira and Neto, 2016). If that is the case, it is important that teacher educators in higher education institutes create formal opportunities for student teachers to reflect upon their future practices. However, the approach to such formal opportunities should not be traditional/knowledge-based, because it appears to be problematic (Korthagen and Kessels, 1999). For example, within the university at which I teach, a knowledge-based approach to teacher education is still employed. Although we know that teachers will engage in learner-based teaching in the future, we still have no power to reflect that in our teaching/curriculum. Consequently, the outcomes of such teacher education may not be as effective as hoped. According to Korthagen and Kessels (1999), in knowledge-based or traditional approaches to teacher education, teacher educators present much of the available practical knowledge that is thought useful for prospective teachers. In turn, prospective teachers transfer the practical knowledge that they have received about teaching by carrying out practical assignments so that they become more able to handle pedagogical challenges. For example, a teacher might be provided with practical opportunities in which they use, test and reflect on the different pedagogical approaches that they have learned about, and connect theory with practice. However, research also suggests that many of these teacher education programmes do not in fact connect theory with practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006, Ünver, 2014, Russell and Martin, 2017, Jones, 2017). This implies that knowledge about a certain teaching and learning theory may seem initially unproblematic, but when that knowledge about teaching is applied in a real practical situation, it might become quite problematic (Ben-Peretz, 1995, cited in Korthagen and Kessels, 1999). This would seem to lead prospective teachers to make adjustments to their practices according to the problematic situations that they encounter. This phenomenon is referred to as “transition shock” or the “transfer problem” (Korthagen and Kessels, 1999, p. 5), where prospective teachers struggle to put what they have learned about teaching and learning into practice.

According to Korthagen and Kessels (1999, p. 5), a “transfer problem” is caused by two important factors: the learning process and the nature of relevant knowledge. The first cause is the learning process within the teacher education institute. This is to say that teachers come with preconceptions about education - deriving from the many years of being students within an educational system - which are often inconsistent with the teaching and learning theories

taught in teacher education programmes. The second important cause is the nature of relevant knowledge. According to Korthagen and Kessels (1999), while teachers are in a classroom, they are expected to act in ways that are guided by a certain theory taught in teacher education programmes to achieve certain outcomes. This action-guiding theory is rather different from the action-guiding knowledge which teachers develop while teaching. The action-guiding knowledge can be understood as that learned from dealing with the pedagogical challenges that teachers encounter unexpectedly in their classes, for which the theory learned in the teacher education programme cannot provide solutions.

Although the transfer problem depicted in the traditional teacher education approach is well-known in the field of teacher education (Korthagen and Kessels, 1999), many continue to employ a traditional approach today (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, Zeichner, 2015, Roberts, 2016). As a reaction to the weakness of the traditional approach to teacher education, new ways of preparing effective school teachers have been developed. These steps came after acknowledging that student teachers are not empty vessels to be filled with ready-to-consume knowledge or theoretical assumptions about teaching and learning; instead, they are recognised as individuals who bring with them their prior learning experiences, personal values and beliefs that guide their understanding of teaching. This is known as "teacher cognition", which became a field of study during the last decade, exploring 'the actual thought processes that teachers engaged in as they planned and carried out their lessons' (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p. 400). In language teacher education (LTE), it has become established that teachers' prior experience, beliefs, preconceptions, and, most importantly, the sociocultural contexts of their pedagogical practices are all powerful in guiding teachers practices (Borg, 2011). As a result, four trends that characterise LTE programmes were identified by Crandall (2000, pp. 34-36) to help make LTE programmes more effective. These were:

- a shift from transmission, product-oriented theories to constructivist, process-oriented theories of learning, teaching and teacher learning;
- efforts … to transform teaching through a focus on situated teacher cognition and practice and the development of concrete, relevant linkage between theory and practice throughout the teacher education programme;
- a growing recognition that teachers' prior learning experiences play a powerful role in shaping their views of effective teaching and learning and their teaching practices;

- a growing concern that teaching be viewed as a profession (similar to medicine or law) with respect to the role of teachers in developing theory and directing their own professional development through collaborative observation, teacher research and inquiry, and sustained in-service programmes.

This list provides a summary of the key themes in LTE, which continue to be of relevance today (Borg, 2011). Arguably, LTE programmes have a powerful influence on teachers' development. Therefore, designing or revising LTE programmes to make effective school teachers should be key tasks of teacher education reform (Faez and Valeo, 2012, Abednia, 2012). In this research study, which explores the nature of LTE programmes in higher education in the Libyan context, this area of teacher development will be thoroughly investigated.

## 3.9 Factors Influencing the Implementation of Educational Reforms

Although there is a growing emphasis on undertaking curriculum reforms to cope with the rapid socio-economic change, to respond to the global advances in technology, and to prepare capable citizens for the future (Gopinathan and Mardiana, 2013, Bui and Nguyen, 2016), it is also recognised that many educational reforms have tended to fail for a variety of reasons. Many research studies have reported that countries have either failed or have encountered serious challenges attempting to bring about educational reforms, despite the fact that these countries had taken the various preparations generally required to effectively put curricular reforms into practice (Sakui, 2004, Qoyyimah, 2009, Chang and Goswami, 2011, So and Kang, 2014, Roy, 2016). Among the inhibiting factors that have been reported are institutional factors such as large class sizes (Bantwini, 2010), which makes the process of carrying out learning activities extremely difficult.. Moreover, organisational issues have been reported, with overloaded timetables and inadequate teaching hours (Tılfarlıoğlu and Öztürk, 2007, Saad, 2011). Other inhibiting factors relate to teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards a reform (Carless, 1997, Lumadi, 2014, Ryder, 2015), the lack of clarity about a curriculum reform (Fullan, 2007), teachers' non-involvement in the change process (Kırkgöz, 2009), and insufficient support or inadequate resources (Hu, 2002, Ryder, 2015, Roy, 2016). In CHAT terms, this is referred to as mediating factors/rules that mediate an individual's activity (Engeström, 2001).

The next section will discuss in greater depth the existing literature relating to influential factors that contribute to the failure of curriculum reform in different contexts.

Four major factors are discussed: teachers' perceptions about curriculum reform; insufficient resources; teachers' non-involvement in the development of the curriculum; and the dissemination process of the reform. Discussing the evidence obtained from research into curriculum reform will allow me to establish what might be the relevant factors in the case under investigation. Indeed, these issues are all similar to ones found in the Libyan case, thus, discussing them can strengthen the researcher's argument for the complexity of the curriculum reform and implementation of the present English language curriculum in Libya.

### 3.9.1 Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Reform

Teachers' perceptions play a crucial role in the education domain (Fives and Gill, 2015, Simmons and MacLean, 2016), especially in educational reforms (Underwood, 2012, Berg et al., 2015). Various research studies from different milieus report that teachers' perceptions about curriculum have hindered effective implementation (Underwood, 2012, Eka, 2013, Cheung and Man Wong, 2012, Karavas - Doukas, 1995, Imants et al., 2013). For example, Underwood (2012) found that although teachers in Japan showed a positive attitude towards English language reform, they were concerned about teaching grammar using the communication-based instruction recommended by the reform objectives. Teachers had the perception that it was very difficult to ensure that students could achieve well in English grammar classes through communicative tasks. This may be because they believed that achieving this goal requires sufficient time in which to enable their students to master the use of English grammar. Similarly, Imants et al. (2013) found that Dutch teachers faced a series of challenges in relation to fostering students' independent learning due to workplace conditions, such as problematic student behaviour and attitudes towards learning, a lack of teacher collaboration to solve learning issues, a lack of peer feedback, and an absence of in-service training courses. Although these challenges are beyond the teachers' control, it has to be recognised that they also play a vital role in the successful implementation of the reform.

Moreover, teachers' perceptions of their new roles in the classroom may also hinder their behavioural change in the classroom (Eka, 2013). Globally, many teachers were reported as having difficulties adapting to innovations passed down to them. This might be due to the fact that many teachers view their roles as knowledge experts who transmit information to their

students (Karavas-Doukas, 1995, Le Ha, 2014). It can be very difficult for educational authorities to encourage teachers to change their pedagogical behaviour simply by introducing a new curriculum without appreciating teachers' perceptions, such as their views of their new roles and the overall teaching and learning objectives (Hong and Vargas, 2015).

If teachers misunderstand the principles of the intended reform, this can also have an impact on its implementation. Research findings suggest that teachers' misconceptions of reforms affect their willingness to accept and implement them (Dailey, 2010, Wu, 2008, Cheung and Man Wong, 2012, Rahman, 2015). These misconceptions seem to cause teachers uncertainty regarding the new methods to be employed in line with the CLT approach, for example, which leads to teachers reverting to their traditional methods of teaching (Kim, 2004, Littlewood, 2007). A detailed account of CLT will be provided in Section 3.10, where I discuss the notion, its underpinning principles, and the criticisms it has faced. This will inform the study about the incongruence between the principles and objectives of the CLT and teachers' conceptions and actual implementation of the approach.

By and large, the theories underlying curricular reforms tend to be unclear for many teachers. In Turkey, a research study carried out by Kirkgoz (2008b) indicated that teachers did not understand the theories upon which the curricular innovation was based and that they failed to recognise the practical implications of the principles of the curriculum. More recently, Park and Sung (2013) found that among the factors that inhibit the implementation of educational reform among Korean teachers is the clarity of information provided about the reform.

It suffices to argue here that, as maintained by Wagner (1991), if the philosophy of a curriculum reform and teachers' perceptions are incongruent, teachers may interpret their reformed curriculum differently, and, which may in turn lead to a failure in the uptake and implementation of the intended curriculum − that is the "activity" (the uptake of the curriculum) and its "outcomes" (the intended objectives) as termed by Engeström (2001), which combine to develop the analytical scope of activity systems. Adequate information should be provided regarding what teachers are required to do in the classroom, rather than merely setting reform objectives with predefined teaching methods and prescribed teachers' and learners' roles. While it is important to note the important role that educational change plays in developing countries, it is also equally important that teachers' conceptions and understandings of reforms also be taken into consideration (Baine, 1993, Elliott, 1994). Thus,

it can be argued that insufficient information about how curriculum change is to be implemented can significantly affect reform implementation (Carless, 1998, Ryder et al., 2014). Teachers expect to receive appropriate support from policy makers so that they are able to adopt and implement educational change.

### 3.9.2 Insufficient Instructional Materials for Reform Implementation

Instructional resources can be defined as the 'print and non-print items that are rested to impact information to students in the educational process' (Effiong and Igiri, 2015, p. 27). Instructional materials, including magazines, newspapers, pictures, and videos, play a key role in the enhancement of the learning experience (ibid.). Although oral teaching can be effective, it can also be an unsuccessful approach to teaching at times. Teachers must use the instructional material available to make their teaching more effective (ibid.), rather than depending on oral teaching. It can also be argued that there should not only be sufficient instructional materials provided, but also multifaceted classroom equipment to support teachers in implementing the intended change (Chang and Goswami, 2011). However, merely using the instructional material does not always represent good teaching and will not always achieve the desired outcomes (Piaget 2009 cited in Wambui, 2013). To make teaching more effective, instructional materials should be selected and used carefully (ibid.). According to Wambui (2013), instructional materials enhance learners' retention of the information given to them.

It can be assumed that a lack of resources and equipment can negatively influence successful reform uptake. For example, Carless (1997) found that among the reasons that influenced the success of curriculum reform in Hong Kong was the lack of resources to foster the teaching process. Similarly, Karim (2004), investigating teachers' attitudes towards implementing English curriculum reform in Bangladesh, found that teachers had serious difficulties in implementing the change due to (among other factors) the lack of teaching and learning resources. Along the same lines, Makunja (2016) found that teachers in Morogoro Municipality in Tanzania failed to put the curriculum reform into practice due to the insufficient resources necessary for teaching and learning.

However, even when resources are provided, if they do not completely fit the principles of the change, they may be seen as irrelevant. It is therefore strongly suggested that careful planning of the required teaching and learning resources should be in place to support student

learning (Minstry of education Guyana, 2016). Thus, to enhance reform implementation, careful selection of teaching and learning tools should be made (Abu Dhabi education Council, 2013). In addition, teachers should bring their own teaching and learning resources to compensate for missing resources that are not handed down to them. For example, teachers can replace large language laboratories used for listening activities by bringing audio players so that they can carry out such activities in their classrooms. It is important to realise that the success of educational reforms also depends significantly on the instructional materials that are available to teachers. It can be argued that the absence of such instructional material can result in poor teaching and learning experiences (Wambui, 2013).

### 3.9.3 The Non-Involvement of Teachers in the Process of Curriculum Reform

According to Huizinga et al. (2014), effective implementation of curricular reform can be achieved if teachers develop a sense of ownership of the curriculum being reformed. This suggests that teachers' ownership should be considered a crucial factor that can facilitate the implementation process. As teachers' sense of belonging and commitment to their work seem to be such essential factors for successful reform implementation, ignoring such concepts might reduce the chance of reform acceptance (Huizinga et al., 2014). Huizinga et al. (2014) claim that if educational innovation is to be successful, it is very important for curriculum designers to help teachers develop a sense of ownership. To foster the idea of ownership as well as knowledge of reform ideas, Bakah et al. (2012) and Ramparsad (2001) suggest that teachers should be involved from the very beginning of the curriculum reform and at different levels, such as school, district and national educational organisations. The need to involve teachers from the early stages of curriculum reform has been suggested because many curriculum reform endeavours have failed to bring about successful implementation (Huizinga et al., 2014). Educational reform is thought to be a waste of time and money if teachers themselves have not been considered in the reform process. Research findings suggest that if teachers are not involved in making the curriculum, the curriculum reforms are more likely to fail (Guthrie, 2012, Huizinga et al., 2014). This suggests that teachers' involvement in curriculum reforms in terms of developing and evaluating materials must not be neglected (Fang, 2010).

However, although teacher involvement is considered crucial, if teachers are involved in this process, curriculum developers need to be aware of the potential knowledge and skill-related

challenges in relation to curriculum design that may exist (Huizinga et al., 2014). In other words, teachers, especially novices, may not have the necessary expertise required for curriculum design. Therefore, Huizinga et al. (2014, p. 33) suggest that supporting teachers to become curriculum designers is important 'since most teachers are novice designers'.

### 3.9.4 Curriculum Reform Dissemination: The Cascade Model

The cascade model is often adopted for introducing major curriculum reforms (Karalis, 2016). It is used in many education systems to help teachers adopt and implement curriculum reforms by educating them so they understand the goals and outcomes of the reform. The concept of the cascade model, also known as the multiplier model, is that a number of selected teachers, particularly experienced teachers, are trained and are given the responsibility to pass on the knowledge to their inexperienced colleagues. It is believed that through this process, the implementation of curriculum reform can best succeed (Talukder, 2014).

The model is considered useful for the delivery of training courses through layers of trainers until it reaches the last and final target individuals (McDevitt, 1998, Kennedy, 2005, Ono and Ferreira, 2010, Dichaba and Mokhele, 2012). Moreover, it can provide teachers with the necessary information about a reform and its implementation (Bax, 2002, Dichaba and Mokhele, 2012), and it is also economical and cost-effective (McDevitt, 1998, Suzuki, 2011).

Notwithstanding its claimed advantages, critics have expressed certain reservations about this model. One drawback of the model is the effect of dilution (Ellinger et al., 1999, Turner et al., 2017). As the knowledge is passed on from experienced primary teachers trained using the cascade model to their inexperienced teachers who were not involved in the training, that knowledge reaches its destination (teachers in schools) in its weakest form. This means that the message that was given for trainers to transfer to the general teachers in schools may be diluted because it is 'passed down through many different levels of personnel' (Suzuki, 2011, p. 31), hence, the message is 'often altered and [its] effects are diluted through miscommunication and different interpretations of the same messages' (ibid., p. 31).

Another drawback of the model derives from teachers' conceptions of their trainers. Research studies suggest that targeted teachers (end users) seem to have concerns about their trainers (Ono and Ferreira, 2010). For example, Ono and Ferreira (2010) state that teachers in South Africa had difficulties in implementing the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE)

Curriculum 2005 (C2005) due to their understanding that trainers who had previously been trained using the cascade model did not themselves understand the curriculum. This brings relates back to the earlier criticism by McDevitt (1998, p. 428) who argued that the cascade model was 'too inflexible to be able to respond to challenge from the grass roots level'. This might imply that the cascade model is a top-down strategy that is too rigid to sufficiently take the needs of the end group into account.

Another criticism relates to where these courses are carried out. One key feature of the cascade model is that it often involves training that takes place outside of school, as seems to have been the case in Libya, too. Consequently, teachers encounter serious challenges when they try to link the training to their teaching practices because it is not school-based or job-embedded (Kennedy, 2005, Hunzicker, 2011). For example, teachers may have a good idea of how to apply a certain concept that they learned during the training, but they may not be able to apply that concept in their context (schools) due to the absence of the facilities or relevant equipment that was available during their training.

Despite the criticism, the cascade model of training seems to be very useful, especially if we mainly consider its underlying principles and goals. In practical terms, however, the cascade model seems to be challenged by teachers' values and attitudes, as well as by other contextual constraints. Research studies attribute the failure of the model to such challenges (McDevitt, 1998, Karalis, 2016).

## 3.10 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): Introduction

English language teaching (ELT) has developed significantly in the last 100 years. Due to the need for good communication skills, there is still great demand for English teaching in the world. Across the world, many people want to improve their own and their children's English by a range of different means, such as the internet, formal instruction, and travel. Concerns about the quality of teaching have pushed researchers to seek out the best methods to bring about effective ELT (Chen, 2014).

The fruits of this research are the various methods for ELT that have been developed. Among these are the grammar translation, the audio-lingual, and content-based teaching methods. The grammar translation method involves a language being translated into the learner's mother tongue and grammatical rules being memorised. The audio-lingual method aims to

develop students' communicative competence through dialogues. The content-based method gives access to internet resources. A server is used to convert the content or message, through automatic translation, to meet the needs of users and even people with disabilities. At first glance, one might think that these methods bring about different pathways to effective language learning and teaching. However, as pointed out by Kumaravadivelu (2001), these methods overlap both in terms of theory and practice. These methods rely fully on theories and practice; that is, they would not make sense without the theories to support them. According to Kumaravadivelu (2001), these methods share similar and fundamental concepts, in that each method breaks from an older one, taking with it some positive aspects (Rivers, 1991). This implies that none of these methods can be considered the single optimal method for language learning and teaching as each of them has been criticised for being unproductive, unhelpful, and having very little theoretical validity in relation to bringing about successful language learning and teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). This has resulted in the emergence of post-method pedagogy, a mainstream form of education which has led to researchers focusing mainly on the uses of communicative language teaching-based methods and materials (ibid.).

In essence, the concept of post-method pedagogy emerged from the high demand for more effective ways of teaching English departing from old, less theoretical and method-based pedagogical limitations (Brown, 2002). Moreover, it was the result of the influence of post-modernism, and the realisation among teachers and researchers that no single method or single research outcome can lead to successful language learning and teaching. According to Kumaravadivelu (1994, p. 29), post-method pedagogy concerns the reconstruction of the relationship between theorisers and practitioners. The key concept of post-method pedagogy is to enable the practitioners to 'construct classroom-oriented theories of practice … and [enable] practitioners to produce local, specific, and novel practices', while the 'conventional concept of method entitles theorizers to construct knowledge-oriented pedagogic theories … and to centralize pedagogic decision making'.

According to Kumaravadivelu (1994), there are three essential features for reconstructing the relationship between theorisers and practitioners. The first feature concerns the search for an alternative to method. The second feature is to allow teachers to be autonomous. This implies that teachers have the ability to know about their teaching and the ability to overcome pedagogical constraints. The last feature is what Kumaravadivelu (1994, p. 30) refers to as "principled pragmatism", which he uses to label his call for practitioners to consider their

thoughts about practice as a tool for prediction, problem solving and action. He recommends such pragmatism as opposed to an eclectic approach of putting 'together a package of techniques from various methods' (ibid. p. 30). For example, teaching can be more dynamic, when teachers engage in an activity, such as communicative language teaching, that allow them to deal with teaching sensibly and realistically based on practical rather than theoretical considerations.

Having said this, the features that Kumaravadivelu (1994) provided are reflected in the modern and alternative approach of communicative language teaching discussed in sections (3.10.1) and (3.10.2) below. Briefly, CLT mirrors what Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 69) called the "context-sensitive post-method pedagogy" which entails "maximizing learning opportunities, facilitating negotiated interaction, … fostering language awareness, … integrating language skills, promoting learner autonomy, ensuring social relevance, and raising cultural consciousness. In this respect, CLT (as will be discussed in more depth later) seems to fit well in the scope of this understanding of the post-method pedagogy.

Curricular reform based on CLT principles, such as the English language curriculum reform in Libya, has been widely advocated by many educationists for its global acceptance. However, although most educationists acknowledge the importance of CLT, research studies suggest that teachers' classroom practices often do not reflect its objectives (Ansarey, 2012, Dailey, 2010, Kalanzadeh et al., 2013a, Roy, 2016).

In the following section, I will review the concept of CLT and then investigate how it is challenged in relation to various behavioural and contextual realities. By doing so, we will gain a clearer understanding of the evidence from the research regarding the relationship between educational policy depicted in CLT and teachers' actual classroom practices. As the English language curriculum in Libya has changed holistically to reflect the principles and goals of learner-centred education using CLT, the following sections are useful for explaining CLT and for identifying its challenges in relation to its application in different contexts around the world. This will inform my research study of the issues around CLT and will help me understand and interpret the current teaching situation of Libyan English language teachers.

### 3.10.1 Features of Communicative Language Teaching

The CLT approach recommends using the language as a tool to communicate and convey messages meaningfully in verbal and written form. The main concern of CLT is to enable learners to engage in communicative tasks effectively (Kavanagh, 2012). Compared to the teacher-centred approach to language teaching, it is suggested that CLT has refined the teaching of grammar (it is to be learned communicatively rather than structurally), how teachers and students should behave in language classrooms, and the content and teaching methodologies that teachers should develop (Chung, 2017).

Following the development of CLT, 'communicative processes became as important as linguistic product, and instruction became more learner-centered and less structurally driven' (Warschauer and Kern, 2000, p. 5). In a social-cognitive approach to language teaching, learners are not only acquiring the skills to develop their cognitive structures, but also the social structures of their discourse and activity (Crook, 1996). In this sense, learners are considered active individuals in the making of knowledge, rather than passive receivers of the knowledge. In turn, teachers are no longer considered knowledge holders, but, rather, facilitators with the responsibility for scaffolding and facilitating the learning process of their students (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

This brings us to the question of teachers' and learners' roles in the CLT classroom. Unlike traditional approaches to language teaching, CLT requires teachers to change their roles from being knowledge holders and transmitters to learning facilitators and advisors (Breen and Candlin, 1980). Learners are expected to develop autonomous learning abilities, with little help from given by their teachers. Learners are also required to engage in discussions where they communicate and negotiate different views and meanings in relation to their learning (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011). As for error correction, in line with CLT principles, it is considered natural and accepted (Mulat, 2003). It can be challenging for learners not to make errors while they engaging in interaction as they may be focusing on the quantity and accuracy of the language more than its communicative features (Jones, 2007).

### 3.10.2 The Communicative Language Approach (CLT): An Overview

Communicative language teaching can be understood as a 'set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom' (Richards, 2006, p.

2). The emphasis of CLT is on learners' communicative competence rather than on grammatical competence. The latter refers to the mastery of language rules and sentence structure, while the former refers to how learners use the language in meaningful communication.

According to Dornyei (2013), communicative language teaching shares similar objectives with traditional language teaching. However, CLT follows a radically different agenda, involving learners in more communicative situations, as opposed to the traditional agenda, which promotes the implicit learning of language through drilling and memorisation activities. Today, CLT has gained wide recognition and acceptance across the world (Radzi et al., 2007, Liao and Zhao, 2012).

CLT proposes new roles for teachers and learners, whereby teachers are expected to play a facilitating role rather than being the knowledge holders, whereas learners are encouraged to engage in classroom activities in a more cooperative manner (Richards, 2006). In CLT, learners are strongly encouraged to engage in various cooperative activities such as pair work, role-play, and group work activities. This leads us to the notion of cooperative learning (henceforth, CL). CL is a 'group learning activity organised so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others' (Olsen and Kagan, 1992, cited in Meng 2010, p. 702). Vermette (1998) (cited in Meng, 2010, p. 207) defines CL as a classroom activity that comprises 'a relatively permanent, heterogeneously mixed, small group of students who have been assembled to complete an activity, produce a series of projects or products and/or who have been asked to individually master a body of knowledge'. Notably, these definitions fall under the principles of socio-constructivism, namely knowledge construction, learner-autonomy, collaborative work, and social context.

CL is highly socialised, interactive, and communicative in nature. Its wide recognition and application could be attributed to two central reasons. First, it is broadly based on 'a clear theoretical foundation [socio-constructivism] and hundreds of validating research studies' (Johnson and Johnson, 2009, p. 366). Second, it is also beneficial not only for academic learning but also for other social and personal domains, as it is believed to involve effort to achieve successful interpersonal and social relationships (Johnson and Johnson, 1992). CL requires learners to participate actively in groups or pairs to share their knowledge during

classroom activities to achieve a common goal assigned to them. These kinds of learning activities occur in a socialised and collaborative environment where learners play important roles in the group to accomplish the given activity. In the CL classroom, the teacher's role is that of a facilitator, an organiser and a manager of the classroom activities employing appropriate strategies to achieve the desired objectives.

As mentioned earlier, CL developed from a socio-constructivist understanding of learning. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), who are amongst the leading proponents of CL, the increasingly widespread use of CL is attributed to it being based on socio-constructivism theory. This suggests the success of the theory in providing understandings of how learning occurs and hence helping provide effective teaching strategies that correspond to these understandings to provide effective learning experiences. CL is a pedagogical strategy which has been widely used in all areas of education in the US, the UK, Australia, and in many other countries. In relation to language pedagogy, the principles of socio-constructivism have been applied to language learning through pedagogical models such as CL (ibid.). In the US, for example, Nunan (2013) affirms that when constructivism was applied to language learning through cooperative learning, it proved to be very successful. He noticed that school learners guided by their teacher were able to express their opinions and ideas, solve language problems, and use certain language for certain situations effectively. It is argued that cooperative learning should be a priority in all education systems to 'keep up with the times and make a difference in the society' (Altun, 2017, p. 451). Further discussion of CLT and CL, as two different but inter-connected pedagogical practices, and their challenges is provided later in this chapter.

In summary, CL as a pedagogical practice is considered powerful to the extent that it can be used 'with some confidence at every grade level, in every subject area, and with any task' (Johnson et al., 1995, p. 4). The four main principles of socio-constructivism consider knowledge as subjective rather than objective and as actively constructed rather than a product that is directly transmitted by the knowledge holder. Socio-constructivism emphasises learner-autonomy and collaboration among learners within a social context. All these principles shape much of the learner-centred pedagogical approach that my research participants were required to implement. This theoretical framework is in line with the Libyan English language curriculum reform as it encourages learner-centred education. The following section provides an in-depth comparison between CLT and the traditional approach to English language teaching, namely the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). These are

the two key teaching approaches that English language education in Libya has adopted (Aloreibi and Carey, 2017).

### 3.10.3 CLT Versus Traditional Approach to English Language Teaching

The focus of the traditional approach to language teaching is on teachers' ability to transfer knowledge to their students. Teachers are considered to have grammatical knowledge which can be transferred to their pupils through grammatical practice activities to ensure correct sentence structure. There are various traditional approaches to language teaching in the field, namely the Grammar Translation Method (henceforth GTM), the Direct Method, and the Audio-Lingual Method. Their main principles are based on the following features:

- Careful analysis of the target written language, particularly its grammar.
- Learning of the grammar rules.
- Use of native tongue as the medium of instruction.
- Greater use of translation exercises.
- More emphasis on reading and writing skills (Walia, 2012, p. 126)

In order to cope with the economic requirements of the modern world, knowledge and communicative skills are now required. To use the language communicatively requires communicative competence, which has become a key theoretical concept in the CLT field (Cummins and Swain, 2014). The traditional approach to language teaching has been criticised for failing to develop learners' communicative competence (Attar and Chopra, 2010). As Hymes (1986) argues, knowing a language does not merely mean knowing the grammatical and phonological rules. This means that learning a language can be achieved effectively without the mastery of language structures. The following table demonstrates the principles of the GTM (as mentioned earlier, this is the approach that was used in Libya's English language education for so long) (Aloreibi and Carey, 2017) and the CLT approach to language teaching, which has been introduced as an alternative approach to GTM.

**Table 5:** CLT vs Grammar Translation Method.

| Principle | Grammar Translation Method (GTM) | Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) |
|---|---|---|
| Characteristic of Teaching Learning Process | 1. Students are taught to translate from native language to the target language.<br>2. Students learn grammar deductively.<br>3. Learners memorise native language equivalents for the target language vocabulary. | 1. Everything is mostly done with communicative intent.<br>2. Students use the language through communicative activities such as games and role-plays.<br>3. Communication is purposeful.<br>4. Uses authentic materials.<br>5. Activities are often carried out by students in small groups.<br>6. Grammar is taught inductively. |
| Nature of Interaction | 1. The interaction is mostly from the teachers to the students.<br>2. Little student initiation.<br>3. Little student-student interaction. | 1. Teacher is a facilitator.<br>2. Teacher sometimes becomes co-communicator.<br>3. Students interact with one another. |
| Handling the students' feelings and emotions | 1. There is no principle related to this area. | 1. Motivate the students.<br>2. Teacher gives the opportunity to the students to express themselves individuality.<br>3. Students' confidence is enhanced by cooperative interaction. |
| The role of native language of students. | 1. The meaning of the target language is made clear by translating into the learners' native language.<br>2. The native language is mostly used in teaching and learning process. | 1. Students' native language is permitted.<br>2. Most of the activities are explained using target language, and native language only for certain things. |
| The language skills that are emphasised. | 1. Vocabulary and grammar are emphasised.<br>2. Reading and writing are the primary skills. | 1. Functions are reintroduced, and the more complex forms are learned.<br>2. Students work on all four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) from the beginning. |
| The way teachers respond to students' errors. | 1. Correct answers are extremely important.<br>2. If students make an error, the teacher will supply them with the correct answer. | 1. Error of form is tolerated during fluency-based activities.<br>2. The teacher may note the learners' errors and return to the learners with accuracy-based activities. |

Adapted from Natsir and Sanjaya (2014, p. 59)

The traditional approach to language teaching is essentially based on the principles of producing error-free interactional patterns through intensive grammatical exercises. Through

such exercises, it is hoped that learners will use the language with very minor errors by focusing on the elements to achieve the intended outcomes. Teachers tend to favour traditional teaching practices for various reasons, including teachers' trust in their traditional teaching, their beliefs about what works best in the classroom, and many other reasons that affect teachers' willingness to change their pedagogical behaviour.

### 3.10.4 Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is the language literacy that the user of a language demonstrates to engage effectively in meaningful interaction with others (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Communicative competence is important for language learning as it includes 'expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning and looks to both psycholinguistic and socio-cultural perspectives in second language acquisition (SLA) research to account for its development' (Savignon, 2002, p. 1).

It is important to note that to be communicatively competent, enough knowledge of the language's structures should be gained (Bagarić and Djigunović, 2007). It is through that knowledge that communicative interactions can be made effectively (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011). In other words, communicative competence is underpinned by the knowledge of the target language's lexicon and grammatical structures (Canale and Swain, 1980). Cummins and Swain (2014, pp. 113-114) provide a summary of the components of communicative competence, summarised in Table 6 below (see Cummins and Swain, 2014).

**Table 6:** Features of communicative competence

| Component of communicative competence | Description |
|---|---|
| Grammatical competence | This includes knowledge of vocabulary, rules of word formation, pronunciation/spelling and sentence formation. |
| Sociolinguistic competence | Reflects the degree to which specific utterances are appropriately given, for example, the topic, the status of the participants, and the purpose of the interaction. |
| Discourse competence | This includes the mastery of cohesion (e.g. the ability to connect text with appropriate conjunctions or adverbs) and coherence, the ability to arrange ideas in logical sequence and organise meaning effectively. |
| Strategic competence | This involves the use of "coping" strategies to avoid breakdown in communication or to enhance the effectiveness of spoken discourse or written texts. |

In relation to my research, communicative competence has been one of the main goals that curriculum designers in Libya have sought to achieve through the present English language curriculum. However, it seems that the present curriculum has not yet attained this goal for reasons that this research study will try to investigate. Taken together, it is important to notice that communicative-based curriculum reforms are likely to encounter challenges, as with the Libyan case, as they seem to neglect the linguistic competence of the second language learners. For many teachers, linguistic competence is considered an essential feature that leads to successful learning outcomes; but without sufficient knowledge of the linguistic forms of the second language, innovations in language teaching and learning, such as CLT, may fail.

### 3.10.5 Challenges of Communicative Language Teaching

Although CLT seems to be an appropriate approach to teaching language, teachers seem to encounter several difficulties in implementing the approach in their classes. Research studies report numerous factors, such as time restrictions, pupils' learning abilities, and inflexible curriculum materials, all of which appear to inhibit teachers' implementation of CLT (Sachs

et al., 2003, Gillies and Boyle, 2010). For example, in Gillies and Boyle's (2010) study, teachers reported that although they enjoyed using the CLT approach (as did their students), they had concerns about the various obstacles that they encountered during its implementation. Many factors that influenced using CLT were reported including time constraints, the organisation needed to employ CLT, grouping of learners, learning assessment, and motivating students. This suggests that although teachers are aware of the benefits of CLT for their learners, it seems that its implementation is an enormously difficult task.

Although the context of the above study is different from the context of this study, the results can help our understanding of the challenges that Libyan EFL teachers have encountered in implementing CLT in their settings.

### 3.10.6 Impact of Culture on Communicative Language Teaching

The implementation of CLT might encounter challenges relating to certain social realities, such as teachers' relationships, support and encouragement from school principals, and the roles of teachers and students as seen by the society. An example of the influence of culture on implementing CLT in the language classroom is given by Westbrook et al. (2009), who investigated two newly qualified teachers in Pakistan and their transition from students to school teachers. The researchers found that among the challenges that these teachers encountered were their in-school professional relationships and the perspectives of local society. The researchers also found that the influence of learners' home culture and community seems to influence how effectively CLT can be implemented. For example, boys in Pakistan appear to receive more parental support than girls because girls, for cultural and religious reasons, are expected to get married early. This was considered a serious factor of demotivation for female students to participate in cooperative learning, and thus resulted in the ineffective implementation of CLT by the teachers.

In another context, Zhang et al. (2013) found that Chinese culture plays an essential role in shaping teachers' and learners' conceptions of learning. In addition to other barriers, such as examinations and teachers' resistance, the authors found that the Chinese students' learning style and their teachers' roles in EFL were significant barriers to the implementation of CLT in their classes. Zhang et al. also argue that social context should be taken into account prior to introducing the CLT approach as neglecting this could result in its failure.

More recently, Rahman and Karim (2015) investigated teachers' reactions to an innovative approach to English language learning introduced in Bangladesh. One major cultural barrier that they identified was the fact that Bangladeshi culture considers teachers as authorities of knowledge and learners as passive recipients who should sit quietly during class. This aspect of Bangladeshi culture 'prevents genuine communication from happening in class, making it a hindrance in the application of CLT' (ibid., p. 84).

Taking these findings together, it can be argued that CLT can be significantly hindered by sociocultural factors. Communicative language teaching is largely perceived as an ineffective approach for not taking into consideration the cultural aspects of the target contexts. For many teachers, as discussed earlier, putting CLT into practice seems to be a challenging task unless cultural and contextual realities have been considered by those involved in curriculum making.

# Chapter 4: Research Methodology

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the overall research approach adopted for the current study. Firstly, I will introduce my research questions. Next, I will explain the underlying reasons for employing a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach to addressing the research questions. Then, I will describe the specific research methods (vignettes, semi-structured interviews and classroom observation) chosen for this study and the issues relating to data analysis. Subsequently, I will describe the research participants (who they are, how they were contacted and recruited) and describe the ethical considerations relating to this research study. After that, I will provide information about how the research data will be analysed. Finally, the question of credibility in qualitative research will be discussed. But before going any further, it is important to clarify why the research approach chosen for my research is the most relevant one. This will first inform the reader of my epistemological and ontological understandings of how knowledge is constructed and also enable me as a researcher to administer my research based on these understandings.

As a researcher, the methodological stance that is relevant to my research study is that of a social constructivist. In qualitative research, there are three interconnected activities that the researcher will need to undertake before commencing a study: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Ontology refers to how the reality or world under investigation is understood. For example, knowledge about a phenomenon, such as teachers' educational beliefs about teaching and learning, can be regarded by qualitative researchers as subjective rather than objective knowledge. This perspective leads to the epistemology stage, which relates to how I understand that knowledge using a set of questions. These questions are then examined, answered and analysed using specific sources of information and data analysis (ibid.). These are the three activities I also bring for this research study.

In terms of my ontological stance, I do not view knowledge as an objective reality, but rather as a reality that is socially constructed through interaction between me (the researcher) and the participants within a particular environment (the research context). Thus, my epistemological belief is that knowledge is socially constructed through social interactions,

rather than being imprinted in minds. The intention here is to provide concrete interpretations and descriptions of the participants' conceptions, understandings, and behaviour to understand their conceptions of the world (Brinkmann, 2018). I employed an interpretive research paradigm as a mode of inquiry in this research study. An interpretive design is also described as naturalistic, constructivist, and qualitative (Bryman, 2016, Robson and McCartan, 2016). Therefore, the terms "qualitative" and "interpretive" will be used interchangeably in this research study. In the following section, I will explain the theoretical assumptions which characterise the interpretive research paradigm.

Many educational theories can be adopted to interpret research findings. Quinlan et al. (2013, p. 38) defines theory as 'a coherent set of general propositions that offer an explanation of some phenomena by describing the way other things correspond to this phenomenon. Put another way, a theory is a formal, testable explanation of some events that includes explanations of how things relate to one another'. For the term "proposition", Quinlan et al. (2013, p. 41) define it as the 'statements concerned with the relationships among concepts. A proposition explains the logical linkage among certain concepts by asserting a universal connection between concepts'.

According to Quinlan et al. (2013, p. 43), the theory that best fits a study can be selected by collecting relevant research data that can be interpreted in the light of the selected theories. However, theories are often examined and scrutinised in a new context, so it is the researchers, with their collected data, who can confirm their suitability. Overall, I found using CHAT very useful for providing me with valuable insights into the relationship between the conceptions of Libyan secondary English language teachers and their classroom practice.

As this research is qualitative in nature, it is important first to define what qualitative research actually consists of. This will give us a clearer understanding of why a qualitative approach is widely used, especially if the purpose of the research is to investigate an implicit phenomenon, such as human beliefs, or to search for understandings of certain human actions, such as teaching in certain settings. Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 10) define qualitative research as follows:

> Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them.

The definition given by Denzin and Lincoln (2018) above suggests that phenomena are best understood by interpreting people's conceptions of these phenomena according to their responses gathered using the data collection methods at hand. As this research study seeks to understand and describe English language teachers' classroom practice in their natural settings (schools) by interpreting their behaviours, my research paradigm fits with the definition above.

Given the range of studies that may be listed under the heading of "qualitative research", it may be difficult to determine the characteristics that qualitative research studies may have in common (Silverman, 2014). Instead, Silverman (2014) presents a table of "preferences" for using a qualitative approach that he adapted from Hammersley (1992, pp. 160-172):

1- A preference for qualitative data – understood simply as the analysis of words and images rather than numbers.
2- A preference for naturally occurring data – observation rather than experiment, unstructured versus structured interviews.
3- A preference for meanings rather than behaviour – attempting 'to document the world from the point of view of the people studied' (Hammersley, 1992, p. 165).
4- A rejection of natural science as a model.
5- A preference for inductive, hypothesis-generating research rather than hypothesis testing (Glaser and Strauss, 2009).

However, Silverman (2014) points out that Hammersley (1992) himself considered this list of preferences as overgeneralised and suggested that these preferences cannot be taken to represent the features of qualitative research. However, such preferences can be taken as a fair representation of the main aspects of qualitative research and this list is likely to capture the preferences underlying this thesis.

Within the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other languages), Richards (2003, p. 8) presents three good reasons for using qualitative as opposed to quantitative approaches. Firstly, the quantitative approach is 'not designed to explore the complexities and conundrums of the immensely complex social world that we inhabit'. This assumes that the world is complex and not created by measurable facts, as suggested by the advocates of positivism, who ontologically believe that there is a single reality or truth which can be measured experimentally. Arguably, if we seriously want to understand our complex social world, we need to go beyond the use of quantitative methods.

Secondly, Richards (2003, p. 9) suggests that a taking a qualitative approach to research is ‘a person-centred enterprise’. The difficulties involved in trying to enhance our understanding of people in their natural settings and the remarkable circumstances that are at work imply that an alternative to a quantitative approach is crucial.

Finally, there is what Richards (2003, p. 9) describes as the ‘transformative potential for the researcher’. In qualitative research, the researcher has to be involved and must address his or her own role in the process of the research. For this reason, Richards (2003) prefers the term qualitative “inquiry” to better express the notion of ‘personal inquiry and discovery’. In my research, I found the notion of the “transformative potential of the researcher” applicable. As a case in point, my research experience has altered my perspectives regarding English language teachers in Libya. Prior to conducting this research, I held the belief that English language teachers have negative views about the present English language curriculum in general, and that they are responsible for its ineffective implementation. Now, I have come to realise that the beliefs I had about English language teachers were not true.

Many of the studies indicated in the previous chapter point to the heavily personalised and contextually dependant nature of what is being studied in this thesis. Therefore, a quantitative approach that depends considerably on the use of questionnaires or survey tools is unlikely to capture important informative data. The reason for this is that such methods are generally aimed at a large number of individuals and may not detect the individual nature of belief systems. Moreover, in quantitative research, the researcher is involved in the creation of seemingly objective results, which are later measured and tested based on the hypotheses or the specific questions at hand. Quantitative researchers use structured questionnaires which usually include response categories to guide participants to select what best describes their thinking about the question given. While a quantitative approach tends to be used for descriptive and casual research designs, a qualitative approach is often used in exploratory research designs. Table 6 (see Bryman, 2016) illustrates some key differences between quantitative and qualitative research, with consideration given to the methods employed in my own research.

In qualitative research, the researcher engages with the participants, and hence subjective results are obtained using the right tools, e.g. semi-structured interview, which will open the way to participants freely expressing their feelings and views. This will eventually enable the researcher to closely observe, record and interpret his/her participants’ views. As this study

seeks to investigate teachers' own perceptions of teaching the present English language curriculum by listening to teachers' voices and focusing on their perceptions, actions, thoughts and feelings, there is an argument that a qualitative approach is the more appropriate. Table 7 below summarises some key differences between quantitative and qualitative research (see Bryman, 2016)

**Table 7:** Some key differences between quantitative and qualitative research

| Aspect | Qualitative research | Quantitative research |
|---|---|---|
| Aim | Exploratory; understanding ideas or generating detailed understanding of the phenomenon | Proving or disproving hypotheses |
| Analysis | Interpretation of speech and action | Descriptive and inferential statistics |
| Source of information | Semi-structured/unstructured interviews<br>Vignettes, journals, diaries<br>Observation | Standardised/structured questionnaires |
| Researcher's role | Researcher is involved | Researcher is detached |
| Research data | Data that is open to interpretation | Objective data |

There are other research approaches too that can be used to investigate education-related problems of the kind that are the focus of this research study, ethnography being one example. Ethnography is defined a 'type of qualitative research that gathers observations, interviews and documentary data to produce detailed and comprehensive accounts of different social phenomena' (Reeves et al., 2013, p. e1365). This definition suggests that an ethnographic approach offers qualitative researchers the potential to gain comprehensive data about different social phenomenon, such as beliefs, practice, interactions, etc. Ethnography as a method of investigation allows researchers to obtain rich data by immersing themselves into the field of investigation for a lengthy period of time (Silverman, 2016). It is important to note that the main focus of ethnographic research is on direct observation. Listening and asking questions (though still important in ethnographic research) are ancillary (ibid.). According to Silverman (2016, p. 105), there are two research strategies used in ethnographic research, namely '*non-participant* observation and *participant* observation'. Non-participant

observation involves observing participants from a distance, to investigate the symbolic sphere. The key characteristic of this type of observation is that the researcher does not interfere with the individual's actions, as this could affect the way the individual behaves, which could eventually lead to obtaining less informative data. In participant observation, the researcher is part of the individual's activities being researched while also analysing and describing the event that he/she is observing.

Compared to many other forms of qualitative research, such as phenomenology ("the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view" (Smith, 2013, p. 1)), ethnographic research is more difficult to undertake due to the need to spend long periods of time collecting data that offers a comprehensive account of a particular phenomenon. For this reason, ethnographic research was disregarded for this study as I was limited by the short time available for data collection. Time was constrained by the civil war taking place in Libya, the unstable political situation and the serious life-threatening situation which made it very risky for me to stay longer than the time that was originally planned for data collection, and which all, in return, could have impeded my journey back to the United Kingdom.

## 4.2 Research Questions

Mason (2002, p. 20) stated that 'often qualitative researchers will use the existing literature, research and theory as a background or springboard for launching their own research in ways to which connect it with current debates'. As I have demonstrated, the existing literature stresses the importance of studying how teachers implement curricula innovation. There is also a significant body of research which points to the crucial role of teachers' beliefs and contextual realities in determining the success or failure of educational innovations, and in clarifying the connection between beliefs and behaviour in teaching (Spillane et al., 2002, Handal and Herrington, 2003, Borg, 2006, Keys, 2007, Borg, 2015b).

Drawing on my role as a university English language teacher and my understanding of the debates around the implementation of CLT-based curriculum reform, it seems that CLT teachers tend to construct their own knowledge of CLT during their higher education (universities) before they join the teaching profession. In Libya, for example, and probably in many other countries, it is at university where teachers in general and English language teachers in particular get to know and understand what teaching is about. What they learn at

university will very likely affect their actual teaching when they join the teaching force. If they are taught using a GTM approach to English language teaching for four years, as is the present approach adopted at universities in Libya, the teachers will see no other choice but to reuse the same approach in their own teaching. The reverse is also true. If a CLT approach is used during the four years of teacher education, the positive results can be much greater as we know that teachers will be able to implement the present CLT-based English language curriculum more effectively. Effective implementation of the present curriculum does not only mean that teachers implement it effectively, but also that students at higher education English language schools are able to complete their education successfully. This will have positive implications not only for us as university teachers, as we will be dealing with high-achieving first-year university students, but it will also be positive for the whole of Libyan society, particularly the children who will be taught English by well-qualified teachers, leading them (the children) to become successful citizens.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Libyan secondary teachers are required to teach a new curriculum with very limited training in the new materials and new approach, and despite receiving a traditional English language education at university. Since the introduction of the present English language curriculum, classroom realities and the actual performance of teachers have not been widely reviewed. The reviewed literature and the context of the study, therefore, lead to the following research questions:

1- How do Libyan secondary English teachers perceive the new curriculum?

a- What views do they hold about the reform?

b- What beliefs do they hold about teaching and learning? How do these beliefs relate to the agenda of the reform?

c- Where do these beliefs stem from? How are these beliefs reflected in their classroom?

d- How do teachers find the supporting documents? (e.g. teachers' guidebook, etc...)

2- What are the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the dissemination of the innovation?

a- What was the model employed to disseminate the curriculum to the teachers?

b- What was the training provision like? What were teachers' views of the effectiveness of the training provision?

c- How do these perceptions affect teachers' pedagogical practice?

3- How do they implement CLT policies required? What are the implications for current and future practice?

a- What types of lesson activities are employed?

b- How well do teachers implement the teaching methodologies intended by the reform developers?

c- What facilitators and constraints do teachers encounter in establishing a CLT environment?

d- Where the CLT approach is not implemented what alternative teaching methods and activities do teachers employ and why?

## 4.3 Contacting Local Gatekeepers

It is crucial for the researcher to contact local authorities and important figures whose permission is required. In order to gain permission, researchers need to justify why their research is important in the targeted context (Cohen et al., 2018). In this regard, I strove to clarify the research objectives and highlight the practical benefits of the study, as well as to justify its design and the various methods put in place for data collection. Once these prerequisites have been clarified, 'researchers will be in a stronger position to discuss their proposed plans in an informed, open and frank manner…and may thereby more readily gain permission, acceptance, and support' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 82).

As far as my research study is concerned, in addition to the teachers, the main figures whose permission was required in order to carry out this study were the Local Bureau of Education (LBoE) in a Libyan city and the principals of the schools where the data collection took place.

In October 2016, I travelled to Libya to begin the fieldwork. On the day following my arrival, I went to the LBoE to meet with the president to discuss my research procedure. Unfortunately, this person was on annual leave and it would be a few days before he could return to the office. A few days later, however, I spoke to his deputy, introduced myself, and

explained the purpose and the procedures of the study. The deputy welcomed the idea of the research and appreciated it being conducted in the city. Also, he assured me that he would provide assistance in order for the fieldwork stage of this study to be carried out effectively. He then issued a letter on behalf of the president which granted me access to the schools in my city. With my personal knowledge of Libyan work practices, I am aware that making contact in person is more culturally appropriate than making contact from a distance, i.e. via email. Indeed, I was promptly granted my ethics approval. Although I initially encountered certain challenges due to the fact that the head was absent, I found that contacting his deputy was the best way forward given the circumstances.

## 4.4 Recruiting Participants

Aware of the impact of culture on teachers' beliefs regarding teaching (Buttjes, 2007), I selected my participants from secondary schools to learn about the influence of the professional context and school culture on their conceptions of teaching and learning and on their classroom practices. It is believed that the influences of cultural structures and learning experiences can be detected in the teachers' conceptions of their classroom roles and their practices. As I was collecting and analysing my data, it became apparent that the similarities among my participants' views in relation to the influence of cultural structures were more significant than the differences.

Marshall and Rossman (2016, pp. 106-107) propose that (for qualitative research) the ideal research site is where:

> (a) entry is possible; (b) there is a high probability that a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest is present; (c) the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the participants in the study; (d) the study can be conducted and reported ethically; and (e) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured.

Moreover, Morse (1999) suggests that a good participant is one who is able to reflect, communicate, eager to participate, and has the knowledge and experience that the researcher requires. Therefore, it is suggested that qualitative researchers need to select their informants purposefully (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015, p. 230) adds: 'The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for study in depth. Information rich cases are

those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry.'

Taking these considerations into account, I decided to conduct my research in Al-Elm city (pseudonym). As an original inhabitant of this city as well as a former English language teacher there at secondary school level, I considered it best to conduct my research in this particular city. My work experience in this city enabled me to establish relationships with the local education officials, who agreed to provide me with access to the secondary schools in this city in order to identify teachers who might be willing to take part in the research.

Suitable teacher participants were expected to have been teaching the current curriculum for at least 15 years (this curriculum was introduced in early 2000-2001). This would allow them to provide information about their experiences of teaching the previous curriculum, their experiences while preparing for the transition, their experiences during the transition itself, their experiences during the development of the curriculum, and their practices following the transition.

In order to recruit my research participants, I had to seek permission from local authorities, including the LBoE and school principals. To gain initial permission, I contacted the Local Secretary of Education in the city by email and provided all of the details regarding the study. Once I received permission, I then contacted the headteachers in person and provided all the necessary details regarding my research (e.g. research purposes and implications, and length of my field work at their schools – all outlined in the Participation Information Sheet). When four headteachers did not give their permission for me to contact staff from their schools, I contacted another four headteachers from other secondary schools, who subsequently gave their permission for me to speak to their teachers about my research study and invite them to take part.

Once these permissions had been obtained, I contacted and invited potential participant teachers directly and then met them at their schools. During the recruitment process, when contacting potential headteachers, I stressed the importance of interviewing and observing experienced teachers only. Therefore, in recruiting participants, I focused on contacting experienced secondary teachers, i.e. teachers with more than 16 years of teaching experience so that they would have been teaching before, during and after the implementation of the present curriculum. As there were six long-established secondary schools (founded in 1967), I felt that these would most likely employ experienced teachers. In the end, ten secondary

English language teachers from seven schools met my criteria used for selecting the participants.

Although I had intended to work with 12, I only managed to work with 10 participants as two participants withdrew for unknown reasons before the data collection. All of the teacher participants were very helpful and supportive in explaining to their students who I am and the purpose of my research. I cannot deny the fear that I had felt prior to collecting my data about the hurdles I would have to overcome to select participants who would be willing to give up their time and allow me into their classrooms. The participants did so because they were convinced of the purposes of my research and they wished to help me.

## 4.5 Instruments of Data Collection

It has been suggested that the research paradigm determines the appropriate methods for gathering and analysing the data (Silverman, 2000). Arguably, there may be a variety of different methods available to the researcher within the chosen approach. Olafson et al. (2015, p. 128) claim that studying complex phenomena, such as teachers' educational beliefs, requires an appropriate research approach that serves the aim of the research. They suggest that 'a deeper understanding about the ways in which teachers develop, change, and act upon their beliefs over time and in a variety of contexts requires the use of qualitative approaches in which researchers can attend fully to the lived experiences of teachers'.

The above quotation seems to serve the current study in terms of the choice of an appropriate approach and methods. Exploring Libyan teachers' educational beliefs in action is more likely to be achieved through observations of their classroom practice. Nevertheless, statements of their beliefs and intentions could be obtained through vignettes, semi-structured interviews, or even questionnaires. In the current study, questionnaires were abandoned as a method of data collection for several reasons. First, according to Bryman (2016), self-report questionnaires do not typically allow participants to seek help if they have difficulties understanding a question. Further, in such questionnaires, the researcher has no opportunity to probe participants for more elaborate answers. Also, in a questionnaire, the researcher might not be able to ask questions that are important to the participants. Although a questionnaire is designed to obtain answers from a particular group, there is a chance that someone else, perhaps a member of a household or a friend, completes the questionnaire instead of the intended individual. Having considered all of these factors, a qualitative

approach was employed in this research to avoid such issues. Compared with data collected from questionnaires, a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to obtain more robust data using appropriate data-gathering tools (observations, interviews). I will now present the instruments that I employed in my study.

In this study, I employed the triangulation of methods to enrich the data of my research. Triangulation is the use of 'more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena' (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 402). Denzin (1970, p. 310, cited in Bryman and Bell, 2015) used the term more broadly to imply 'multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, source of data, and methodologies'. But mainly, the focus was on the methods of investigation and the sources of data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Not discounting the complexity involved in employing triangulation techniques, it has also been suggested that they increase overall confidence in the findings (ibid.).

There are four types of triangulation that are widely known in the literature. The first and most relevant type for my research is method triangulation. Method triangulation involves researchers using multiple sources of enquiry simultaneously, such as interviews, observations and diaries, to support findings (Carter et al., 2014). The second type of triangulation is researcher triangulation, whereby two or more researchers work together to provide more observations and findings, thereby adding greater perspective to the study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). The third type of triangulation is concerned with the use of multiple theories to support the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Using this type of triangulation, various theories can help researchers support or refute their findings (Carter et al., 2014). The fourth type of triangulation is data source triangulation. In this case, different types of subjects are sought so as to gather multiple perspectives and to validate data. With this type of triangulation, individuals, groups, families and communities are sought as research participants (ibid.).

According to Yin (2013, p.102), one major principle in research studies is to generate multiple forms of evidence from various sources, either to triangulate research data to seek a 'convergent line of enquiries' (p. 47) or to investigate individual sources of evidence (p. 121). For my research, I adopted method triangulation (Carter et al., 2014). The data collection methods employed in this research comprised multiple sources of enquiry, namely vignettes, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and follow-up interviews. Vignettes were considered suitable for my research as they could be aptly used to explore the views,

experiences, beliefs, and motivations of individual participants regarding specific issues (Bryman, 2016). Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations are likely to complement one another, and data that seems difficult to observe, such as feelings, thoughts, and attitudes, can be gathered through a set of interviews (Patton, 2015). Classroom observations were considered appropriate for providing the researcher with opportunities to observe teachers' classroom practice. Social research suggests that classroom observation can be used as a way to increase the validity of a study, as they provide context for further exploration of the teachers' beliefs and practices (ibid.).

To identify similarities and differences (or contradictions) among the participants' responses, I utilised the same methods with every respondent; that is, I used vignettes, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and follow-up interviews with each participant teacher. The data collected through these research tools were analysed separately and the conclusions derived from these analyses were compared. I will discuss these methods in more detail in Section 4.6.2.6. The following sections will provide an in-depth account of the data collection methods employed in this research, followed by a discussion of the procedures.

### 4.5.1 Vignettes

Vignettes are extensively used in qualitative research. Vignettes are 'short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond' (Finch, 1987, p. 105), typically within the context of an individual interview. Within qualitative research, vignettes creatively encourage and enable participants to define the situation in their own terms. Since the vignette technique requires scenarios to be believable, considerable attention is necessary in their construction (Bryman, 2016, Finch, 1987).

Previous studies in various disciplines, e.g. social work, education, and psychology, have employed vignettes (Al Sadi and Basit, 2017, Finch, 1987, Sheppard et al., 2000, Törrönen, 2018, Wilks, 2004). For example, Sheppard et al. (2000) asked social workers to think aloud about how they would respond to a series of vignettes. Methodologically, this work proved helpful in terms of illustrating the kind of data that can be gathered by using vignettes. Moreover, vignettes have been used to tap general attitudes and beliefs by eliciting cultural norms derived from participants' attitudes and beliefs about specific situations. Vignettes can also be useful tools in exploring sensitive topics that respondents might otherwise find

difficult to discuss (Barter and Renold, 1999). As reflecting on a story might have a less personal impact than commenting on direct experience, it is often conceived by participants as being less threatening.

In my research, presenting participants with vignettes at the very beginning of the interview process helped not only in facilitating discussions regarding respondents' views and personal experiences (Bryman, 2016), but also in developing a rapport by making participants feel at ease (Barter and Renold, 1999). However, as Barter and Renold (1999) stress, caution needs to be taken so that vignettes do not shape participants' responses, as the main goal of the research is to uncover participants' views and conceptions regarding a certain phenomenon, without imposing leading questions (Bryman, 2016). Vignettes proved to be an invaluable tool for my research when investigating the perceptions, beliefs, and meanings of certain hypothetical situations, and are especially beneficial in investigating sensitive areas that may be quite tricky to access through other means of inquiry.

### 4.5.2 Interviews

The interview is 'a conversational practice where knowledge is produced through the interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee (or a group of interviewees)' (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 1008-1009). Nowadays, it has arguably become one of the most widespread knowledge-eliciting methods used across the human and social sciences to explore the conceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of individual participants (Brinkmann, 2018).

There are three fundamental types of interviews that can be used in research: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. Structured interviews consist of verbally administered questionnaires (Creswell, 2014b), where the interviewer provides a list of predetermined questions to ask, with no possibility of using follow-up questions to encourage further elaboration. Consequently, they are relatively quick and easy to manage. They are also useful for clarifying certain questions, especially when it comes to exploring literacy or numeracy problems. However, they only allow for limited participant responses and are, therefore, ineffective if in-depth information is required.

Unstructured interviews are less organised, and researchers using this type of interview have no preconceived theories or ideas (Creswell, 2014b). Unstructured interviews are usually very time-consuming and can be difficult to control. As this type of interview lacks predetermined interview questions, research participants will have little guidance on what

to talk about, which can prove rather confusing and unhelpful for them. This type of interview is essentially employed when researchers require significant depth of information about subject areas that are virtually unknown, or they seek different ideas regarding a known subject area.

The third type of interview (semi-structured) was the one employed in this research. These consist of several important questions that help define the areas to be studied, but also leave space for the interviewer or interviewee to elaborate or diverge in order to elicit or provide more detail (Brinkmann, 2018). This type of interview is used most frequently in healthcare as it provides participants with some guidance on what they can talk about, but are also widely employed in the social sciences, particularly where in-depth exploratory studies are carried out. Unlike the structured interview, the flexibility of this type of interview allows for the exploration or elaboration of information that is important to the interviewees.

Rubin and Rubin (2001) maintain that one of the main aims of interviews is to explore how other people think without imposing the interviewer's views on them. However, it is also argued that the interviewer's world, personality, and values have a significant influence on the interview. This influence is reflected in both the interviewing process I adopted and in the questions that I provided to the interviewees. It is suggested that the interviewer should always be sensitive to his or her responses to the interviewee and try to identify the impact these responses may have on the interviewing process (ibid.). This is something that I have endeavoured to do during the interview stage. My own recording of both my immediate reactions to the interview responses via field notes and my later impressions guided by listening to the recordings and keeping a research record were very useful in enabling me to develop my interviewing skills and sensitivity.

Miller and Glassner (2016) note that interviewees might at times be concerned about what will happen to the interview data collected. As a result of this concern, interviewees may adjust what they say according to what they see as "socially acceptable" responses (Michael, 2016, p. 306) or by saying what they think the researcher wants to hear. Certain recommendations have been made in order to reduce these limitations associated with interviews. One of Cooper's (1993) recommendations is to consider the teacher's role as that of an "expert" who possesses the information that the researcher needs. In return, the interviewer must strive to be approachable and trustworthy when dealing with the interviewee and to maintain such a status that the interviewee feels it is worth giving up his or her time

and effort to respond to the questions. Cooper also recommends that by connecting interviews with observations, it can help the researcher compare teachers' responses to interview questions with naturally occurring situations in order to enhance their validity. I attempted to follow these helpful recommendations during the interview phase of my research.

To avoid limiting the depth and breadth of the participants' discussions, semi-structured interviews were employed in this research study. The major purpose of the interview was to give the researcher the opportunity to explore the subjects' perspectives (Patton, 2015). Dornyei (2007, p. 143) conceives of the interview as 'a natural and socially acceptable way of collecting information … which can be used in a variety of situations … to yield in-depth data'. Furthermore, the interviews allowed time for the teachers to explore their feelings, thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs, and they provide the chance for the interviewees to find their voice (Brinkmann, 2018). Moreover, as the interviews are open-ended in nature, the teachers were able to focus on issues significant to them, and to respond to their own frame of preference (Longhurst, 2016, Bryman, 2016). Since interviews are generally conversational in style, the teachers would likely feel more confident and willing to trust me (Preissle and Le Compte, 1984).

In this study, I followed Cooper's recommendation in relation to making research findings authentic. First, I used phrases that I hoped would make the teachers aware of their expertise and the long time they had spent in teaching. For example, I told one teacher at the beginning of the interview that I was impressed by the number of years they had spent in teaching. I remarked that I had far less teaching experience than they did and that they needed to teach me how teach. I also tried to be as approachable as possible by smiling at them while they were responding to my questions, and by nodding my head with a smile as a sign that I viewed what they were saying as very important and was something that I appreciated.

In constructing my interview questions, as I had a good overview of the phenomenon in question (teachers' beliefs and their practice), broad questions about the topic were developed according to the criteria that Patton (2015) and Dornyei (2007) recommended for good interview questions. The first criterion that I followed was to use open-ended questions, such as: *How was the curriculum introduced to you as a teacher?* because the aim was to 'minimize the impositions of predetermined responses when gathering data' (Patton, 2015, p. 353). Another guideline followed was to avoid asking leading questions (Bryman, 2016). Finally, an important characteristic of a successful interview, as many researchers emphasise,

is the flexibility of the interview process (Dörnyei, 2007, Yin, 2013, Creswell, 2014a, Patton, 2015, Bryman, 2016). The researcher can use probes to 'deepen the response to a question, increase the richness and depth of responses, and give cues to the interviewee about the level of response that is desired' (Patton, 2015, p. 372). I used the technique in this study, as is discussed further in Section 4.6.2.2.

### 4.5.3 Classroom Observation

Observation is 'a method for systematically observing the behaviour of individuals in terms of a schedule of categories' (Bryman, 2016, p. 267). Classroom observations are widely used in qualitative studies. Participant observation is conducted for a wide variety of purposes, most of which are related to human activity investigations (Angrosino, 2018).

There are two major types of observations, namely, structured observation (also known as systematic observation) and unstructured observation. Bryman (2016) views structured observation as an alternative to surveys, as surveys tend to fail in investigations of human behaviour. Thus, structured observation, where participants are observed systematically using predefined categories or observation schedules, can provide the researcher with an opportunity to view a problem from another angle. While structured observation seems to be less accepted in some research fields, it is popular where the focus of study is on behaviours and interactions, especially those between school teachers and pupils.

Unstructured observation does not employ an observation schedule for the recording of behaviour. Instead, the aim is to record the behaviour of participants to develop 'a narrative account of that behaviour' (Bryman, 2016). In this research, with a view to exploring and interpreting teachers' classroom behaviour, as well as teacher-student interactions and relationships, I carried out classroom observations with my research participants using structured observations. This was intended to seek further insight into the teachers' practice by collecting data in a systematic way, according to my predefined observation schedule.

Observation is important for qualitative interviewers as it offers an invaluable means of 'providing descriptive contextual information about the setting of the targeted phenomenon' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 185). Since my aim to investigate how the educational beliefs that teachers articulate might be related to what they do in their classrooms, there was no alternative but to enter those classrooms and observe what happens. As Nunan (1989, p. 76) maintains, 'There

is no substitute for direct observation as a way of finding out about language classrooms.' A well-established way of analysing classroom interaction is through observation.

As Nunan (1989) notes, it is important to be cautious of the interior observation schedules that observers bring into the classroom, whether the observation schedules are pre-determined or based on field notes. This requires acknowledging that objectivity is virtually impossible because what we see depends largely on the beliefs and attitudes that we bring to the observation (ibid.). Classroom observation can also place significant psychological pressure on the observed teachers. Similarly, Allwright and Baily (1991, p. 6) point to the psychological and ethical issues involved in classroom observation and the pressure these aspects may place on pupils and, in particular, on teachers:

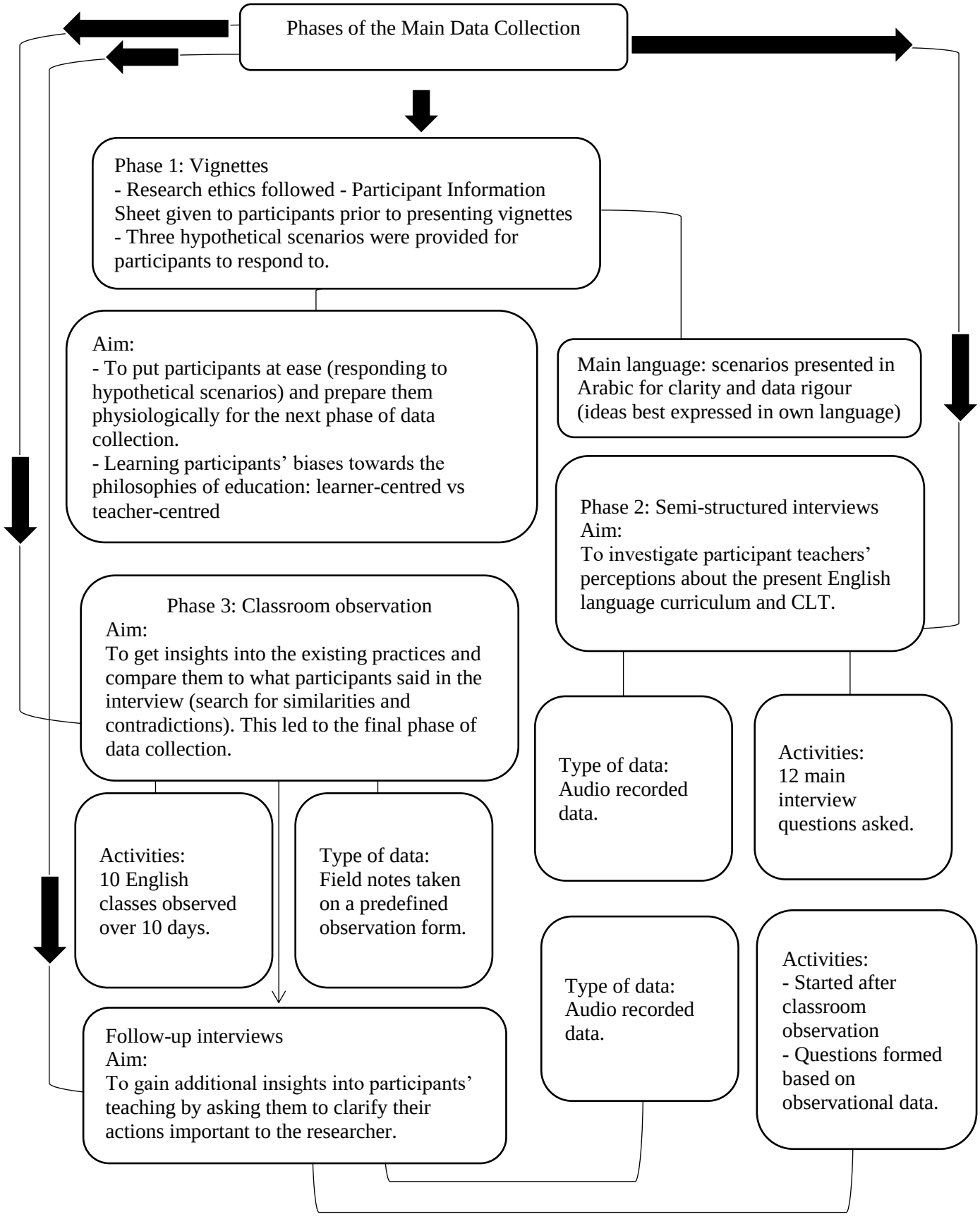
> In some instances it appears that teachers are more nervous with visitors than are learners. In a sense the learners are already giving public performances in class anyway, but the observer may be perceived as posing an unusual threat to the teacher's power base.

Allwright and Baily (1991) go on to note that if participants have worries about being observed, then it is more likely that the lesson will become less effective and less natural. On a practical level, it is suggested that repeated visits to the classroom could help teachers and learners to feel at ease in the presence of the observer. Following Allwright and Baily's recommendation, my design, which involved conducting interviews and observations, enabled these repeated classroom visits to take place.

## 4.6 Procedure

In this section, I will discuss in detail how I undertook my research. I will first provide information about the pilot study conducted for this research. Second, I will provide a detailed account of how the actual research was undertaken. Third, I will provide in-depth information regarding the process of my research data analysis. Finally, I will discuss the issues relating to credibility in qualitative research. The flow diagram below demonstrates the data collection process that I followed.

**Figure 5**: A flow diagram for all data collection process



### 4.6.1 The Pilot Study

The pilot study was carried out at the University of Glasgow with three Libyan doctoral students who had been high school English teachers in Libya before being awarded scholarships to pursue PhD degrees.

I invited those students to participate in the pilot study mainly because they had taught the present English language curriculum and had enough teaching experience to comment on issues and challenges that they may have encountered. There was no need to obtain official permission from the educational authorities in Libya to conduct the pilot study because the participants were no longer school teachers. The only permission that I had to seek was from the doctoral students themselves.

Although they were familiar with the concept of a pilot study, I had to explain to them the purpose of the pilot study and of my research. Once I had obtained their agreement to take part, I spent about 45 minutes with each of the participants. During the pilot study, the participants were asked to comment on the semi-structured interview questions that were designed for the actual research. The aim was to check the clarity of the questions and the adequacy of my research methods (Bryman, 2016). Moreover, I wished to identify questions that may make participants uncomfortable answering (ibid.). On a personal level, piloting the study also provided me with some experience of conducting actual interviews to allow me a 'greater sense of confidence' using this technique (Bryman, 2016, p. 260).

The pilot study was undertaken in a quiet room on the university campus where we would not be interrupted by people working or studying nearby. Before beginning, I used the Participant Information Sheet to provide the participants with important information about my research project as well as their rights during the research process. Although this may not always be necessary in a pilot study, it at least gave me a chance to articulate and practise explaining the content of that information sheet.

First, I piloted the three vignettes (see Appendix C), to which the participants would be asked to respond. I read them one by one in English, resorting to Arabic only if something needed to be clarified. Twenty minutes was sufficient time to complete the vignettes. All of the vignettes were clear to the participants and nothing required changing in the wording.

When piloting the semi-structured interview, more caution was given to the participants' understandings of the interview questions. English was used as the means of communication for the interview since the participants speak the language very well. However, when they asked for clarification of unclear interview questions, I asked them to use Arabic instead to avoid any misunderstanding of their comments on the questions. This allowed me to recognise where the difficulties lay. Most of the interview questions were clear to my participants, but a few caused some problems. For example, interview question number 3 (see Appendix D for all interview questions) was unclear to the participants. The question was:

*Can you tell me about the dissemination process of the new English language curriculum?*

The participants did not fully understand the question, particularly the word *dissemination*. What I meant was "their experience of being introduced to the present English curriculum". So, using Arabic, I explained to them what the question meant. Thus, I had to change the question so that it became clear not only for them but, of course, also for my actual research participants. For clarity, the original sentence was amended to:

*Can you tell me your experience of being introduced to the new English language curriculum?*

## 4.6.2 The Main Research

As discussed previously in this chapter, this research employed a combination of three types of research methods to obtain complementary data: vignettes, semi-structured interviews (the main and the follow-up interviews), and classroom observation. The following sections will provide a detailed account of how the main research study was conducted.

### 4.6.2.1 Vignettes

The first phase of data collection involved the vignettes. Based on my teaching experience as well as my understanding of the teaching and learning philosophy underpinning both the previous and current English language curricula, I constructed the vignettes personally, to encourage responses to relevant issues of teacher/learner interactions and views about learning and teaching approaches. The vignette interviews were conducted in the teachers' rooms in their schools according to their availability and convenience. The intention of presenting the vignettes prior to the other phases of data collection was to put the teachers at

ease, as they merely had to respond to hypothetical scenarios, and would thus probably feel less threatened.

As recommended by Bryman (2016), I made sure that the room was quiet so as to avoid any noises that might affect the quality of the sound recording. For effective employment of the vignettes, as recommended by many researchers (e.g. Finch, 1987, Hughes, 1998, Barter and Renold, 1999, Bryman, 2016), I tried to make the vignettes to appear plausible and real to the participants and relevant to their personal experiences, while avoiding upsetting scenarios that may be distressing and not depicting disastrous events. In anticipation that some of the participants may prefer the Arabic version, I prepared versions of the instruments in Arabic as a back-up, translating the vignettes into Arabic – the native language of both the interviewer and interviewees. Although I used English with Arabic as backup in the pilot study, I decided to translate and conduct the vignette interviews in Arabic because ideas are best conveyed in someone's own language (Bryman, 2016), especially when attempting to obtain complex data such as teachers' educational beliefs. Additionally, this form of presentation avoided putting the participants in an embarrassing situation in which they may not be able to use English effectively or made grammatical mistakes. The participant teachers were then told that the whole study would be undertaken in their own language (Arabic) and this made them feel more relaxed. The vignette interviews took around 20 minutes to complete. All data was voice recorded using a high quality mp3 voice recorder and my phone as a backup (ibid.).

Before beginning this phase of data collection, I used the Participant Information Sheet to explain to my participants the purpose of my study, stressing that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time if they no longer wished to proceed to give answers to the questions. My research participants were presented with three vignettes upon which they were asked to reflect (see Appendix C). The three short vignettes (roughly ten-sentence paragraphs) were designed to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' views about English language education in schools. The purpose of the first two vignettes, for example, was to gather information about whether or not the participant teachers had positive views of the progressive and transmissive philosophies of education (learner-centred vs teacher-centred philosophy). This information was deemed important because the present English language curriculum is a progressive curriculum. The information to be obtained related to the participants' beliefs about progressive education. I wished to make a link between the participants' beliefs and their implementation of the present English language curriculum.

The purpose of the last vignette was to gather information about the participant teachers' beliefs about the purpose of education in general. I sought to understand whether the teachers saw the purpose of education as something to enable learners to discover other cultures so that they become better prepared for adult life or to ensure that learners secure future jobs and fulfilling careers. This information is important because the purpose of English language education, though not explicitly stated in the present curriculum, is to enable learners to become ready to take on jobs where advanced communicative skills in a foreign language are required. Understanding the beliefs that my participants hold regarding the purpose of education is crucial for explaining English language teachers' behaviour in relation to the implementation of the present English language curriculum.

#### 4.6.2.2 Interviews

The interviews with the participant teachers were also conducted in schools, and, again, according to their availability and convenience. The original duration planned for the first interviews was 40 minutes, but they took slightly longer as further questions emerged. For the purpose of transcription and data analysis, these interviews were recorded, too. The interview questions were also translated into Arabic because as conducting the interviews in the participants' own language was likely to make them more comfortable and more likely to reflect on the interview questions in greater detail. The only drawback to conducting the interview in Arabic in this research is that it involved the time-consuming task of translating their responses into English when transcribing the interviews.

All interview questions and sub-questions (n=12) were open-ended. I also translated the interview data into English for better handling, as I was using NVivo (a professional qualitative data analysis software package) which may not accept the importing of Arabic scripts. Moreover, the data and the results of the analysis were all to be reported in English in this thesis.

The main focus of the interview questions was on the factors that either facilitated or inhibited the implementation of the present English language curriculum. There were also questions where I investigated the teachers' perceptions and thoughts about the former and the present English language curricula. For example, the interviewees were asked to identify key differences between teaching the old curriculum and the present curriculum. They were also asked to give details about how they could implement the present curriculum more

effectively. Interview questions also probed the link between social culture and teaching the curriculum, including the impact of stakeholders' (e.g. principals, teachers, parents, students) religious beliefs regarding teaching and learning, how the teacher-student relationship is seen by society and by the teacher and the students, and how the community views teachers' and students' classroom responsibilities. During the interview, other questions also emerged to solicit further elaboration on the participants' responses. Using probes as an interview technique enhanced the richness and depth of my participants' responses (Patton, 2015). For example, when one teacher remarked that they had not attended the training course, I sought to understand the underlying reason for the response provided.

Interviewee*: I didn't attend the training course, but a friend of mine told me that it was only a one-week training course, which is silly because it is insufficient and incomplete.*

Interviewer: *Can you tell me why you didn't attend?*

#### 4.6.2.3 Classroom Observation

The first set of interviews was followed by classroom observations conducted over a ten-day period. I observed the participants in their classes during regular school days and at normal class times for approximately 45 minutes. A schedule of items/checklists to inform my observational data collection was created (see Appendix E). Making a schedule is important as it helped me record the participants' classroom behaviour (how pair work activities were carried out, for example) in a systematic way so that similar behaviours are categorised according to the behaviour being investigated (Bryman, 2016).

These classroom observations gave me the added opportunity to 'see directly what people do without having to rely [solely] on what they say they do' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 185). Through classroom observation, I managed to acquire invaluable data related to the participants, their practice, and their physical and affective teaching environment. During these observations, I took the role of a non-participant observer, sitting silently at the back of the classroom. I also tried to avoid direct eye contact with teachers to minimise the influence of my presence in the classroom (Laurier, 2016). If my presence were less noticeable, it would be less likely to influence the behaviour of either teachers or students. The observational data provided a detailed account of the work which characterised the teachers' practices during the lessons. The data collected also showed the extent to which these practices reflected the curriculum principles.

To enrich my observational data, I took field notes to complement the observation schedule/checklist. Bogdan and Bilden (2007, p. 108) define field notes as 'the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in qualitative study'. The field notes included a description of the setting, what the teacher was writing on the board, how the teacher was teaching, how the teacher initiated the lesson, the teacher's teaching method, and my own immediate responses to what was seen. As recommended by Miles et al. (2014), in writing these notes, I used private easy-to-remember abbreviations so as to record as much potentially important observational data as possible. I found my private abbreviations very helpful because they prompted me to remember things that I had not fully noted down during the observations. The raw, hand-written notes were then gathered and re-written using Microsoft Word for text clarity and better handling. As recommended by Miles et al. (2014), this is important in order to accurately read the data and to easily code and analyse them using the data analysis tool available (Miles et al., 2014).

During the classroom observation, many emerging issues were identified (including ones that had not been reported by teachers in the first main interview). I noticed that these emerging issues complicated the teachers' teaching to varying degrees. I identified issues regarding the use of the relevant teaching methods intended by the curriculum makers, the carrying out of pair work activities, and the teaching of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Other relevant details, such as the use of the native language (Arabic) as the means of instruction, were also identified. But before all of that, I also observed whether the teachers demonstrated breadth and depth of knowledge of the subject matter. This was important not because I wanted to assess their knowledge and skills, but because it is crucial to understand if teachers had issues with understanding the curriculum materials (many of the materials require well-qualified teachers for them to be presented as they should be). Having little understanding of the materials could generate more teaching complications. In this regard, I noticed that all of the teachers had a very good understanding of the materials in their observed lessons.

In all of the classes I observed, many students asked for the teachers' permission to go to the toilet. This interrupted the teacher as they had to respond to each student's request and wait for them to go out of the classroom. Another noticeable occurrence was that, in some classes, there was tension between students. The teachers then had to resolve these tensions, and, in some cases, they ended up sending the students causing the problems out of the classroom.

Although seeing this seemed to disturb everyone in the classroom, it also indicated that my presence in the classroom was not influential. The teachers dealt with the problem in the same way that they would have done had I not been there, i.e. they shouted loudly at the students with a strong verbal reprimand. Personally, I would not do this if a researcher was observing me because I would not want to be viewed in an unfavourable way by the observer (Bryman, 2016). This observation tends to give additional credibility to my research as the teachers seemed to have behaved naturally.

Another issue that I identified was the low temperature in the classrooms. All of the classrooms I observed, and probably all of the classrooms in the school, were very cold. The low temperature was caused by broken windows. Taking up more of the class time, many students complained about the 'freezing' temperature (as they described it) – it was very cold indeed. This added more complications to the practice of teaching as many teachers needed to explain to students that there was nothing they could do about it.

In addition to these contextual issues, I also observed teachers using Arabic frequently when teaching grammar, with little English used. This was interesting to me because I had expected teachers to be using English for teaching. I also noticed that many teachers skipped important lessons, especially those components aimed at promoting students' communicative competence, such as speaking, listening and writing activities. In the first interview, no teacher informed me that they use Arabic in their teaching or that they usually skip lessons like these. Moreover, many tasks such as writing were given as homework activities, while they were supposed to be undertaken in the class time. I also observed that group or pair work activities (although scarce) tended to be unsuccessful. Also, there were cases when teachers taught grammar explicitly (rather than implicitly) and using Arabic translations, with many examples on the board, all of which was time consuming and at the expense of other important lessons. All of these points were recorded and informed the follow-up questions to be asked to generate further discussion in the follow-up interviews.

#### 4.6.2.4 Follow-Up Interview

The follow-up interview questions were generated based on the analysis of the observational data at hand. First, I looked at the schedule of the classroom observation and recorded the issues around the implementation of the curriculum, especially issues related to using CLT and CL, as well as other relevant issues. Then, as mentioned earlier, my follow-up interview

questions were created accordingly (see Appendix F). However, the questions varied according to the data collected from each participant teacher.

These follow-up interviews allowed me to obtain a greater understanding of the teachers' conceptions of teaching and the way these conceptions influenced their classroom practices. After each observed session, the participants were interviewed about their practice and their conceptions during that session. The rationale for doing this was to enable me to gain additional insight and build upon the data collected in the first phase of my data collection (vignettes and first interviews). The follow-up interviews took around 15 to 20 minutes, depending on the time available to the participants and the activities carried out during the observed session.

These interviews afforded the teachers the chance to provide their side of the story, so to speak, i.e. to justify some of their actions, particularly those which seemed to be in conflict with the objectives of the curriculum. For example, I asked the teachers about what I had noticed in relation to skipping certain tasks. Their answers to this question were almost identical, which provided me with a greater understanding of the issues they faced when teaching English. For example, I learned that the 45 minutes that are assigned to their English language classes were enough if no teaching complications arose. In the main interview, most of the teachers had complained about the short class times. What I had understood from the teachers' comments during this main interview was that the 45 minutes they have were not enough for teaching different lessons. Although my understanding seems to have been correct, as the lessons did indeed require more than 45 minutes to complete, there were other emerging issues that complicated the timing of lesson activities, e.g. students frequently going to the toilet. The teachers explained that this created problems for their teaching as they had to respond to each request that students made. With respect to the issue of skipping important tasks, e.g. group work activities, the short class times were only part of the cause; it was also due to the students' lack of willingness to participate in these collaborative activities, i.e. an issue relating to the students themselves.

I also asked the teachers about the cold classrooms and if that influenced their teaching. I understood that this issue did indeed influence their teaching because of the complaints that the students made about the cold classroom. For example, many teachers found that they had to respond to these complaints many times at the expense of class time. So, rather than using the class time efficiently, the teachers spent some time in class responding to students. In a

similar way to the previous concern (frequently going to toilet), the cold classrooms affected teachers' time management, their teaching and task completion.

The follow-up interviews also clarified the use of Arabic as the medium of instruction. Prior to the classroom observations, I had expected to see the teachers teaching in English. So, I probed the teachers about this issue to ascertain what potential problems there may be with the use of English in their teaching. Likewise, I explored further the observed use of traditional teaching methods. This observation was also unexpected because, in the first interview, most of the teachers reported that they employed CLT in their classes. As this was not, however, reflected in their teaching, I asked them about their use of traditional teaching methods. I also asked them about the tensions that I saw in the classrooms and how that affected their teaching. While I had not expected to see such tensions, the large number of students in each class might well explain why they arose. All of these additional data obtained from the follow-up interview questions were very useful in clarifying issues and questions that emerged from either the original interviews or the observations; they gave new additional insights to help understand the practical complications in English language teaching other than those reported in the first interview. All of the data gathered from the follow-up interviews were also transcribed and stored safely for analysis.

#### 4.6.2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are important in any type of educational research. As research involves investigation of phenomena using methods to obtain informative data about these phenomena, these research studies could be a source of ethical issues (Holmes, 2012). Ignoring ethical issues in one's research is dangerous as this can affect the integrity of the research and the people that are involved. Each procedure in a research study could be a source of ethical problems, which can include what Bryman (2016, p. 125) usefully breaks down as harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception. Any research study that involves these four ethical issues is unacceptable. 'Harm' entails actions such as 'physical harm; harm to participants' development; loss of self-esteem; stress and inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts' (ibid. p. 126).

Researchers are enjoined to protect their participants from harmful consequences, such as disturbance of the relationship between research participants and their environment, by ensuring the confidentiality of the participants. This implies that data obtained from the

participants and data about the participants themselves should be kept in a safe place where access to these data is limited only to the researcher. Thus, data protection is an important measure that a researcher must take to ensure confidentiality. As per Holmes' (2012) recommendations, in order to preserve the confidentiality of my data, I did the following:

- I avoided storing sensitive data such as participants' names and addresses on either fixed or portable storing devices; computer hard disk drive or pen drives.
- I identified participants with codes. The list of participants' names and their codes are then stored in different locked cabinets.
- I adhered to the Data Protection Act; the researcher and participants signed a letter confirming this.
- I avoided including participants' names on the transcripts.
- I ensured that data were safely locked in a cabinet.

Another fundamental precaution that I took was to obtain informed consent. According to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 52), informed consent forms contain four elements, namely, "competence" (participants are able to give permission), "voluntarism" (participants can withdraw from the research at any time), "full information" (participants are given information about the research and its goals), and "comprehension" (participants are made aware of the procedure of the research and the risks it might involve).

Bryman (2016, p. 125) cites two other fundamental sources of ethical issues: invasion of privacy and deception. Privacy can be violated due to the incorrect use of research methods, e.g. using covert research methods (methods used to implicitly obtain private data that participants do not want to reveal). Deception entails telling research participants different research goals from the real aims that the researcher is actually trying to achieve. Steps were taken to ensure that neither of these issues arose in this study.

As this is a social research study, the above ethical considerations were seriously considered during the process of data collection. In fact, as a research student at the University of Glasgow, I was obliged to obtain ethics approval and ensure that my research followed the university's Research Ethics protocols. I then sought written consent from officials at the

Local Ministry of Education to undertake my research in Libyan public high schools, as well as written consent from the participants themselves.

In all aspects of my research, I promised my participants confidentiality and non-traceability, and that my research would not cause them any harm. I also clarified that the aim of my research study is not to evaluate their teaching but rather to investigate the problem they encounter in relation to teaching the present English language curriculum. I stressed that they could ask questions at any time, and that, if they so wished, they could withdraw without giving reasons. I then assured them that copies of the transcripts would be sent to them for verification. It was stressed that they would be referred to by pseudonyms and that they would not be identified in any publications arising from the research. Finally, I highlighted that their research participation would have no effect on their teaching careers.

#### 4.6.2.6 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the careful and systematic classification of general statements to identify the key factors that can eventually help to understand them or build a theory from them (Wolcott, 1994, Corbin and Strauss, 1997, Graue, 2015). Qualitative data analysis can also be employed to explore and describe problematic factors where routines and practices are affected (Flick, 2013). According to Flick (2013, p. 5), qualitative data analysis 'combines approaches of a rough analysis of the material (overviews, condensation, summaries) with approaches of a detailed analysis (elaboration of categories, hermeneutic interpretations or identified structures)'. The aim is to reach generalisable statements by comparing the various informing materials of the phenomenon under investigation – something I endeavoured to undertake for this research.

In the analysis of my research data, the most common approach to qualitative data analysis was employed, namely, thematic analysis (Bryman, 2016). Thematic analysis refers to the extraction of key themes in the data under investigation (ibid.). In conducting thematic analysis, I was guided by the helpful Framework approach identified by Bryman (2016, p. 585). As I was transcribing the vignettes, the first and follow-up interviews and while reading my observational data, I was able to extract the key themes in my data and identify recurring themes and sub-themes while addressing the research questions. Furthermore, the flexibility given by thematic analysis allowed the emergence of new themes other than those related to my research questions. Although my literature review represented my framework of analysis,

it was not possible to predetermine all possible themes. That is to say, I had to derive some themes inductively, as Bryman (2016) recommends. A thorough reading and rereading of the collected data allowed new themes to emerge (see Appendix G for a sample of derived themes from the interview and observational data). Dornyei (2007, p. 245) calls this technique rigorous flexibility, which is likely to allow new insights to emerge. As I was reading and rereading my data, I looked for differences and similarities between the ways in which my participants might have responded to a certain scenario (responding to vignettes) or in relation to my first and follow-up interview questions. I also considered the use of linguistic connectors, such as "therefore", "in my opinion", "however" or "although", as important indicators of the relationships in the participants' minds. Hence, my approach to data analysis can be considered systematic and iterative, moving 'back and forth between data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation depending on the emerging results' (Dornyei, 2007, p. 243).

I began by translating and transcribing the vignettes and the interviews and recording notes of the observation sessions. Transcription can be defined as 'an integral process in the qualitative analysis of language data and is widely employed in basic and applied research across a number of disciplines and in professional practice fields' (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999, p. 64). Transcribing tape-recorded audio is regarded as the initial stage of data analysis and a fundamental process prior to the analysis of research data (Lodico et al., 2010). Transcribing data is an essential part of the analysis procedure as repeated listening to recorded interaction gives the researcher the opportunity to determine phenomena which will be analysed in detail later; it acts as a 'noticing device' (Ten Have, 2007, p. 95). For this reason, I personally benefited from transcribing the audio-files myself rather than relying on external assistance. Doing so provided me with a thorough knowledge of my data (Dörnyei, 2007).

The translation and transcription of the vignettes and the interview data started after each teacher had been interviewed, constituting the first level. As I had no interest in analysing interaction patterns in the vignettes and interviews, but wished instead to understand how the teachers expressed their beliefs, I decided to make an approximate transcription. This involves only roughly transcribing hesitations, clarifying questions, false starts, and so on (Miles et al., 2014). Moreover, I decided not to transcribe punctuation as this seemed to add nothing to the level of transcriber interpretation. I found the transcription of all of the interviews (n=10) very time consuming.

Translating and transcribing each interview took me about two full days to complete. This involved listening carefully to what the participants said in Arabic, finding the English words that best expressed what was said, and typing the transcript in a Microsoft Word document. To facilitate the process, i.e. the listening, translating and transcribing of my audio data, I used Adobe Audition CS5 (a professional audio recording and editing software programme) to playback my audio data. The programme's very helpful features made audio data transcription easier. For example, it showed the whole audio file as a waveform sample, offering the possibility to highlight and repeatedly play a specific excerpt. This was of practical use as it enabled listening and re-listening to data without the need to hit the space bar, to stop the player, and to transcribe data. Adobe Audition also allows users to control the speed of talk, speeding talk up or slowing it down whenever required. Prior to data analysis, all translated transcripts were returned to the participants for validation purposes.

After reading each transcribed vignette-related conversation and interview separately, as well as the observational notes, the recurring themes and sub-themes were identified, which constituted my second level of analysis. Subsequently, I re-read the vignette conversations, interviews, and all of the observational notes and found additional themes to the predetermined ones. I compared participants' responses to the vignettes and interviews and observational notes to identify congruencies and/or incongruences between what the participants said and what occurred in the classroom.

My final level of analysis consisted of coding, or 'the concrete activity of labelling data, which gets the data analysis under way, and which continues throughout the analysis' (Punch and Oancea, 2014, p. 228). Coding involves the categorisation of certain ideas which are later interpreted according to a pre-specified framework. I employed two types of coding techniques: initial coding, which involves reviewing the transcripts 'to dissect them meaningfully while keeping the relations between the parts intact' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 56), and later coding, which involves higher levels of thinking and deeper reflections about data meaning (Miles et al., 2014). Both techniques were used in my research to ensure meaningful relations were established between codes and to promote reflection on the coded data. Coding can be used primarily but not exclusively to categorise similar responses made by participants, so they become clear for the researcher to spot and group in relation to a research question (ibid.)

Afterwards, data from the vignettes, interviews, and follow-up interviews were imported into the software. The data were categorised in a certain order for two reasons. First, to give the researcher a chance to locate the data more easily with the software, particularly when it came to generating the coding outcomes; and, second, because the researcher intended to analyse the data in the order in which it was originally gathered. For example, the vignettes were the first data collection tool, and thus they were placed as the first source. In addition, only the initials of the participants' names were used to label the data documents. For example, a vignette document named Mohammed Ali.docx (pseudonym) was renamed MA_M_LS1_Vignettes, where MA is the full name, M is the gender, and LS is short for Local School 1. The rest of the data (e.g. original interview, follow-up interview) were labelled in a similar manner.

Thematic analysis was utilised to identify similarities and differences between different types of data obtained from the participants. Although I found it time consuming, it made many of the tasks associated with my data analysis easier. Using NVivo involved a process of indexing all of the transcripts, in order to group together all of the pieces of data that corresponded to a certain category or theme; for example, the data from the two interviews regarding teachers' beliefs. Within the category of teachers' beliefs, there was a more detailed breakdown of the types of teachers' beliefs, such as teachers' beliefs about their classroom role, or their beliefs about CLT (see Figure 7 below). Although time consuming, it again increased my familiarity with my data and encouraged me to think analytically when naming and grouping codes. While using NVivo required me to learn to use a new software package, it also saved me considerable time in the data analysis process**.**

Codes, or, as NVivo names them "Nodes", were organised numerically, depending on the researchers' preference and the sequence of the data collection methods. This gave me control over what I wanted to present first in an organised way. Also, it allowed me to retrieve coded data easily. For example, if data about a particular teacher's perceptions of their role in the classroom were to be retrieved, I would click on this teacher's interview, and then highlight the code related to the teacher's perceived role, which comes under the theme "beliefs about English language teaching and learning". NVivo would then retrieve that code and all codes under "perceptions of teachers' classroom roles" across all teachers' interviews. Once coding was completed, I reviewed the whole coding for two reasons. According to Miles et al. (2014), checking coding can help the researcher to refine codes as they can

change during the rechecking process and some codes may not work as there is no data to cover them. Revising is also useful as it provides a good reliability check and it may notify the researcher of any errors, such as unintentional deletion of important responses (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 64).

Despite the benefits of NVivo, various concerns have been raised with qualitative data analysis software. Bazeley and Jackson (2013, p. 7) outline four main concerns relating to the use of qualitative data analysis software, which can be summarised as follows:

- computers can distance researchers from their data;
- there is a dominance of code-and-retrieve methods to the exclusion of other analytic activities;
- use of a computer might mechanise analysis, making it more akin to quantitative or "positivist" approaches;
- there is a misconception that computers support only grounded theory methodology, or worse, create their own approach to analysis.

These concerns are expressed by researchers with significant experience dealing with manual data analysis. As a novice researcher, however, I did not experience these issues. I believe that the advantages of analysing the data mechanically (e.g. the facilitation of data analysis and the simple retrieving of the coded data) outweigh any potential disadvantages.

As I employed vignettes, semi-structured interviews and classroom observation, it was logical to present my research findings in terms of the categories and sub-categories derived from my research data. I tried to ensure the trustworthiness and authenticity of the findings by comparing the data acquired from different sources (vignettes, semi-structured interviews and classroom observation) and by being reflective throughout the research process. The groups of nodes and sub-nodes derived from the vignettes, interviews and classroom observations are shown in Table 8 below.

**Table 8:** Groups of nodes and sub-nodes

| Nodes | Sub-nodes |
|---|---|
| Teachers' beliefs | Beliefs about progressive education, beliefs about teacher and student roles, beliefs about curriculum contents, beliefs about students' learning abilities, beliefs about the Libyan culture, beliefs about school culture. |
| Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) | Constraints to conducting group work activities, constraints to teaching listening, reading, writing, and speaking, organisational and physical constraints, cultural barriers. |
| Observational data for CLT | Lesson initiation, pair or group work, teaching aids, grammar teaching, language as a means of instruction, teaching listening, reading, writing, and speaking. |
| Teacher education | Traditional, insufficient support, importance, no support, unqualified university teachers. |
| Professional development | Quality, extent of involvement, importance, expectations, setting related issues. |

#### 4.6.2.7 Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

Trustworthiness and authenticity are terms used in the qualitative research tradition that distinguish it from the equivalent terms used widely in the quantitative research tradition, namely, validity and reliability (Bryman, 2016, Cohen et al., 2018). According to Bryman (2016), reliability is concerned with the quality of measurement instruments and procedures that quantitative researchers follow to produce consistent results. Validity refers to 'a demonstration that a particular instrument in fact measures what it intends, purports or claims to measure' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 245). Distinguishing qualitative research from quantitative research in terms of research quality is based on the grounds that validity in quantitative

research entails ‘connotations of measurement’ which in qualitative research are not a major preoccupation (Bryman, 2016, p. 383). Thus, the terms “validity” and “reliability” were replaced in qualitative research with “trustworthiness” and “authenticity”. Authenticity, however, is more concerned with action research (Bryman, 2016), and hence is not discussed here. Trustworthiness is further characterised in the following section.

According to Cohen et al. (2018, p. 248), trustworthiness in qualitative research is characterised by four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Unlike reliability and validity, which ‘presuppose that a single absolute account of social reality is feasible’, credibility is based on a major view that there are multiple truths that can explain a phenomenon being investigated (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). So, if there are ‘several possible accounts of an aspect of social reality, it is the feasibility or credibility of the account that a researcher arrives at that is going to determine its acceptability to others’ (ibid., p. 384). In order to achieve credibility, it is important for a researcher to follow the conventions of good research conduct. One technique that can be used to ensure credibility is what Guba and Lincoln (1994, cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 384) refer to as “triangulation”. As discussed in Section 4.5, triangulation entails the collection of data from different sources. The purpose of triangulation is to obtain greater insight into the phenomenon under study and hence ‘greater confidence in findings’ (ibid., p. 386), which eventually results in gaining greater trust among the field.

Another area of concern in terms of research trustworthiness is transferability. As qualitative studies tend to employ a small number of participants, the transferability of findings from one context to another may not be feasible (Cohen et al., 2018). This is because qualitative findings ‘tend to be oriented to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of the social world being studied’ (Bryman, 2016, p. 384), and thus represent only the phenomenon under study (Cohen et al., 2018). To address the issue of transferability, qualitative researchers can provide what Bryman (2016, p. 384) calls “thick description”. This requires the researcher to provide a detailed descriptive account of the case being studied (Cohen et al., 2018). As argued by Lincoln and Guba (1985), doing so will provide other researchers with data that can make transferability of research findings to other contexts more likely.

The third criterion of trustworthiness is dependability, which mirrors the idea of reliability in quantitative research (Bryman, 2016). To achieve dependability in qualitative research, it is argued that researchers must keep complete records of the research procedure, including the

selection of research participants and all sorts of collected data, such as interview transcripts and observational notes, data analysis tools and procedures, and other relevant records (ibid.) – something I endeavoured to do by carefully keeping a record of the entire research process. Bryman (2016, p. 384) calls this approach an "audit trail". Although audit trails allow for checking the integrity of a research procedure, auditing in qualitative research has not been popular as a criterion to enhance the 'dependability of qualitative research' (ibid., p. 385).

The final criterion of trustworthiness is confirmability. Confirmability in qualitative research is concerned with the view that qualitative research lacks objectivity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). According to Bryman (2016), complete objectivity in qualitative research is impossible to achieve, but it can be increased through confirmability. In this research, I aimed to demonstrate that I acted in good faith (ibid., p. 386), meaning that my personal biases or beliefs have the least possible effect on the decisions made regarding the case being studied. This allows me to eliminate the risk of swaying 'the conduct of the research and the findings deriving from it' (ibid., p. 386). In this respect, confirmability of good faith in research can also be achieved when biases and beliefs have not overtly manifested themselves (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Having discussed the issues around trustworthiness in qualitative research, I will now proceed to present the strategies I employed to enhance the quality of my research study. First, to maximise the accuracy of the data collected, hence its credibility, I used different data sources (vignettes, main and follow-up interviews, and classroom observations), in line with the triangulation method discussed earlier (Carter et al., 2014). Moreover, to achieve confirmability, the vignettes and all of the interviews (main and follow-up interviews) were conducted in Arabic. This allowed my participants to express their ideas more fluently and confidently, which means that more accurate and, arguably, thicker data were obtained. In addition, while carrying out the vignette conversations and the two interviews, I was cautious not to discuss my perceptions of the present English language curriculum, as this might influence how the teachers would respond to my interview questions. Also, during classroom observations, I tried to reduce my influence on the teachers by sitting at the back of the classroom. However, it should be made clear that eliminating the effect of the observer, or, as Bryman (2016, p. 277) calls it, the "reactive effect", is very difficult. Nevertheless, I tried to avoid direct eye contact with teachers in an attempt to reduce my effect as an observer. During observations, I also avoided being judgmental and evaluative. I avoided jumping to conclusions or dismissing something as unimportant or traditional. I observed and recorded

carefully what went on in the classroom and then provided teachers with an opportunity to discuss (or, at times, to clarify) what I observed during the follow-up interviews. Second, to achieve dependability in my research and allow for checking the integrity of the research procedure, an audit trail was employed. That is, I kept complete records of my entire research procedure, including the selection of research participants, the collection of data, data analysis, and the tools used to analyse data all enclosed in a safe folder on my secure university computer.

Third, to make transferability to other contexts more likely despite the small number of research participants (n=10), I provided a detailed account of my research context, design, and procedures. This allows anyone to have a good understanding of how the research was actually conducted. Moreover, it should make my research findings clear to readers and allow for judgements about the extent to which my research findings are applicable to other milieus. Finally, all collected data were made accessible to my supervisors so that they could offer feedback in relation to the integrity of the entire research process – from its beginning until its completion.

In this chapter, I have presented a detailed account of the research paradigm adopted for this study and the rationale for choosing it. I have also presented the research procedures, including the data collection and analysis steps, and the strategies employed to enhance the quality of this study. Providing this relevant information and the detailed discussion of how the research data are analysed to obtain the outcomes and how these relate to the overall domain is intended to enable readers to make judgments about the quality of the research. It is believed that this will give enough strength to the study to warrant the claims the researcher is making. The following chapter will present my research findings.

# Chapter 5: Research Findings

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I report the research findings of the present study in relation to the themes and sub-themes derived from the different sources of data, including the vignettes, interviews, classroom observation, and the follow-up interviews. Before doing so, I will first present the participants' profiles in Table 9 below to provide a clear picture of who the research participants are. All names in the table are pseudonyms and there is no specific information that might identify individuals. The research took place in local secondary schools in Libya.

**Table 9:** Participants' profiles

| Participant's Name (pseudonym) | Gender | School Name (pseudonym) | Average (mean) Teaching Experience |
|---|---|---|---|
| Omar | M | Al-Seraj | 21 years |
| Ali | M | Al-Tahreer | |
| Anwar | M | Al-Anwar | |
| Jamal | M | Al-Thiya | |
| Belgasem | M | Nahda | |
| Majeed | M | Al-Omran | |
| Osama | M | Al-Tauheed | |
| Rafeeq | M | Al-Orooba | |
| Jalal | M | Al-Najem | |
| Yousef | M | Al-Amana | |

The structure of the data collection methods employed in this study (starting with vignettes, followed by main interviews, then, classroom observation, and ending with follow-up

interviews) is organised in such a way as to collect data that will address the research questions. The research questions and anticipated data sources are given in Table 10.

**Table 10:** Research questions with data sources that answer these question

| Research questions | Research instrument | Vignettes questions | Interview questions |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1- **How do Libyan teachers perceive the new curriculum?**<br>1- What views do they hold about the reform? | First interview. | | **How does he/she perceive the curriculum?**<br>• Are the contents of the curriculum suitable, useful, and adequate? If not,<br>• In his/her opinion what are the most difficult part that students may encounter? |
| 2- What beliefs do they hold about teaching and learning and whether these beliefs go against the agenda of the reform?<br>3- Where do these beliefs stem from?<br>4- How are these beliefs reflected in their classroom? | Vignettes<br>First interview. | • What conceptualisation do teachers have about teaching and learning?<br>• What teaching views do teachers hold about education in general but more particularly about English language teaching? | **What is the teacher's philosophy in teaching and learning?**<br>• Does he/she follow an established philosophy, or they have their own teaching philosophy?<br>• Where is this philosophy acquired from? (e.g., teacher preparation program, teaching experience, reading, etc.<br>• Has this philosophy changed or developed? (for example, in comparison to the philosophy of teaching the old curriculum)<br>• How much have the present curriculum played a role in changing the teacher's teaching philosophy?<br>• How does the teacher describe their teaching, before and after? |

| Research questions | Research instrument | Vignettes questions | Interview questions |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5- How do teachers consider the supporting documents? (E.g. teachers' guidebook, etc...) | First interview. | | **Does the teacher use the guidebook?**<br>• Is the teacher teaching the recent curriculum as intended by teacher's guidebook? |
| 2- **What are the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of dissemination the innovation?**<br>1- What is the model employed to disseminate the curriculum to the teachers? | First interview. | | **How was the curriculum introduced to the teacher?** |
| 2- How successful was the training?<br>3- How could these perceptions affect teachers' classroom practice? | First interview. | | • Did teachers receive supportive training/ teacher education with respect to teaching the present curriculum?<br>• How these trainings/teacher education programs helped the teacher in their teaching practices? |

| Research questions | Research instrument | Vignettes questions | Interview questions |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3- **How do they implement CLT policies imposed by the reform in their classrooms?**<br>1- What types of lesson activities are employed?<br>2- What constraints do teachers encounter in establishing a CLT environment? | Classroom observation | | Does the teacher implement CLT activities?<br>• Is the teacher making listening activities? If not, |
| | Follow-up interview | | • Why not? What difficulties, constraints, etc. |
| | Classroom observation | | • Is the teacher making speaking activities? If not, |
| | Follow-up interview | | • Why not? What difficulties, impediments, etc. |
| | Classroom observation | | • Is the teacher creating/encouraging group work activities? If not, |
| | Follow-up interview | | • Why not? What obstacles, circumstances, etc. |
| | Classroom observation | | • How does he/she manage their time in order to complete the unit? |
| | Follow-up interview | | • Does he/she have enough time to complete the lesson? If no,<br>• Why he/she doesn't? What hurdles, complexity, etc. |
| 3- How well do teachers practice teaching methodologies intended by the reform developers?<br>4- Where CLT approach is not implemented what alternative teaching methods and activities do teachers employ and why? | Classroom observation | | What teaching method/s does the teacher employ? If not CLT approach,<br>• What alternative approach/s does the teacher use? |
| | Follow-up interview | | • Why does the teacher use different approach/s? |

## 5.2 Vignettes

As noted in the previous chapter (Section 4.6.2.1), the teachers were first introduced to vignettes. The vignettes were very useful in teasing out the participants' responses because they needed to respond to hypothetical scenarios, which might reduce any sense of threat they might feel about expressing themselves (Finch, 1987, Bryman, 2016).

The next section will present the research findings in relation to the vignettes. I will first present the views that the research participants hold about teaching and learning in general. Then, I will present the findings related to the views that they hold about the progressive and transmissive philosophy of education.

Two main questions were addressed in analysing the data gathered from the vignettes: *What conceptualisation do teachers have about teaching and learning? What views do teachers have about education in general, and, more specifically, about English language teaching?* In the latter question, the participant teachers were required to speak about two different teaching philosophies (discussed in Chapter 2), namely, transmissive philosophy (traditional teaching) and progressive philosophy (learner-based education). Using these two philosophies helped me link teachers' responses to the question. However, links can also be made with other educational philosophies, as discussed in Chapter one.

The vignette data revealed different perspectives of teaching as a profession. The responses varied from one teacher to another. Such variations in responses are important as they can inform the study about how teachers conceptualise teaching and learning. These conceptualisations may affect their actual teaching and/or their responses to changing curricula or practices either positively or negatively. Many teachers' responses yielded views about what proper teaching should be like. These will be reported in the following section.

### 5.2.1 Participants' General Views About Teaching and Learning

This section presents the teachers' views about teaching and learning in general, as well as their educational philosophies. Knowing teachers' educational philosophy can help understand and perhaps even alter their classroom behaviours (Levin and Nevo, 2009, Borg, 2015b). Almost all teachers conceptualise teaching as a valuable profession which helps learners become effective members of the society. For example, Anwar (male) conceptualises teaching as follows:

> *Teaching is a noble profession by which teachers create a generation that makes a good society. The teacher is the person who produces doctors, engineers who will serve their societies.*

This view suggests that the priority for the teaching profession is to create a good society. This is not necessarily aligned with the objectives of the present English language curriculum, which encourages learning the English language primarily for communication and business purposes. Teachers who share similar views about teaching may teach what is necessary in order to create good members of a society, for instance, by preparing students for adult life. Such views represent the views of social efficiency ideology, discussed in Section 2.3.2. Other participants expressed similar views about teaching. For example, Ali (male) said:

*Teaching to me is the base to prepare human life as well as the society. Great societies are built by good education and of course through teaching.*

Others viewed teaching in still different ways. For example, Omar (male) believed teaching to be the guide to his students' bright futures. He commented:

*Teaching is what gives the information to the student that he needs for today or for the future.*

Although he does not state clearly what the future may require, it might be taken that he thinks that the world is changing in many aspects and that students need to be taught to cope with that change. Such a futuristic view of teaching is also taken by Majeed (male), who conceptualised teaching as the key to world knowledge. He said:

*Also, we consider it the key to the new world by learning and discovering the world around us by passing on every piece of information and teaching it to humanity.*

Similarly, Yousif (male) and Osama (male) viewed teaching as something that involved 'giving' or 'sharing':

*Teaching means that there is always a teacher who is qualified and passes on their knowledge to a younger generation.* (Yousif)

*Teaching for me is sharing knowledge with students. Teaching is not only a profession but also a thing that has a lot of good feelings about students and their problems.* (Osama)

The above responses suggest that the teachers are trying to convey that students should be taught in such a way that they are enabled to discover and cope with future changes. According to those teachers, this can be done by passing on knowledge to their students. Such views correspond with scholar academic ideology (Schiro, 2013), which emphasises that teaching and hence curriculum must be based on previous knowledge that has been created by the greatest people in the field. The teachers, therefore, think that their responsibility is to transfer to their students what they need to know (Taylor, 2012). More importantly, the participants' views of teaching are likely to shape and affect their commitment to their careers and hence their classroom practice. Terms such "passing on", "passing through" and "give" might suggest that the teachers have a teaching philosophy which considers teachers as the primary delivers of information, which in turn is likely to influence the way they organise their classroom practices.

Participants' responses to how they conceptualise learning also varied considerably. This is interesting because such variations in teachers' responses could justify the way they look at learning and hence at education in general. One response, which was short but enlightening in terms of how teaching the recent English curriculum might be affected, was provided by Belgasem (male), who said:

*Learning for me is the learning experience that students can have to secure their future.*

This seems to imply that the purpose of learning is so that students, when they finish their education, will have more work opportunities and hence a more secure future. It could be argued that Belgasem thinks about learning as the tool for securing a job, rather than as a tool for strengthening communicative abilities, as is prescribed by the present English curriculum. Ali has a different view about learning, viewing it as a tool that prepares younger generations for the fast-changing world. He said:

*Learning is important for young people because life is changing, and we need to keep up with this change. Learners must know how to speak English well.*

Such views might influence how the objectives of different areas of the curriculum or, more holistically, the entire curriculum are met. This might imply that teachers with similar views might follow the present English language curriculum as far as it conforms with their teaching philosophy, while ignoring other parts, which may, however, be important to students. It is possible to look at this view about learning through the lenses of progressive

views of learning. These responses suggest that learning could be taught for future purposes to cope with the rapidly changing world.

The other two vignettes aimed to reveal the teachers' views about their philosophies of education and yielded some interesting insights into this area. The findings are reported in relation to the two main philosophies of education, namely, the progressive and the transmissive view of education. This will also provide the opportunity to understand the teachers' conceptions in relation to the reviewed literature.

## 5.2.2 Participants' Responses and Understandings of Philosophies of Education.

As mentioned in Section 5.1.1, teachers' teaching philosophies can inform the present study in relation to the reasons why teachers teach in certain ways. The philosophies mentioned above were selected as a conceptual framework mainly because the teachers have experienced two different English curricula during their teaching careers. These curricula were mainly based on the transmissive and progressive views of education. Thus, understanding teachers' conceptions of these philosophies can help identify and interpret teachers' views about education and, more precisely, about English language education. The two vignettes were employed to discover the teachers' views about teaching and learning.

### 5.2.2.1 Vignette 1: Participants' Views About the Progressive Philosophy (Participation Metaphor)

The teachers were asked to give their views about Hala's conception of teaching. Responses to this question varied, and included answers that were in favour of and against the progressive philosophy of English language teaching. Despite the variation in responses, the results suggest that most of the teachers advocated a progressive philosophy of education in English language teaching and learning. For example, Omar (male) seems to share similar beliefs as Hala when he said:

*I agree with Hala 100%. Students must learn independently, and it is their responsibility to learn. If students rely completely on their teacher, the consequences will be disastrous.*

Like Omar, Majeed (male), Fadeel (male) and Yousif (male) all appeared to hold a progressive philosophy of education.

*I agree with [Hala's] method of teaching and with her way in making students find a way to understand their lesson by collaborating with one another to discuss and understand the lesson content through their own discussions.* (Majeed)

*I think the idea of cooperative learning is good. In this case, the students will have the opportunity to engage in discussions with their classmates.* (Yousif)

*It's such a good idea to use new strategies and methods in teaching. We [teachers] should make them depend on themselves by making them do all the hard work, whether it's practical or oral.* (Fadeel)

These accounts show that the teachers agreed with the notion that learning can be best achieved through students collaborating, which generally implies that the participant teachers held positive views of progressive education. However, other participants were against the views that Hala held about progressive education. Anwar (male), for example, commented as follows:

*I don't agree with her because honestly the teacher is the one who should do most of the things. I would give 70% to the teacher's role in the class.*

Ali's reaction to the vignette above is like Anwar's. Ali considers the teacher as the one in charge of leading students' learning experiences. He said:

*I give 75% of the class responsibility for learning to the teacher because he knows best his students. The teacher is the key player in the class. He is the one in charge. He is the source of information that the learners want to learn from.*

Osama (male) made an even stronger statement opposing Hala's view:

*Many students start their English education so late. If English was taught at the very beginning of a child's education, it would be really great for them, as they would become better students of English as they get older.*

What Osama is suggesting here seems interesting. He believes that early language education will significantly help English language learning. He suggests that if students are required to work collaboratively and share learning experiences, as Hala believes, then English language education should be introduced at an early stage of school education (primary schooling particularly). Interestingly, the views that Osama holds about children's early education

might also be applicable to himself as an English language teacher. In other words, teachers' early learning of English language teaching at university, and, more precisely, their learning about progressive/learner-based English language teaching, would probably encourage teachers to translate what they have learned into meaningful practice. This training could have been provided during their university education. However, it is never too late for prospective as well as experienced teachers to have learning experiences that will help them later implement communicative-based English language curricular reforms. To sum up, there is an indication that a significant proportion of my participants (n=7) hold a progressive philosophy of education in English language teaching and learning. But what needs our attention here is how to make effective learning possible, especially at the university level. This will be explored thoroughly in the discussion chapter.

#### 5.2.2.2 Vignette 2: Participants' Views About the Transmissive Philosophy (Acquisition Metaphor)

The teachers expressed various concerns about Ahmed's philosophy of education (transmissive philosophy). Most of the teachers' responses to the vignette were in line with a progressive view of education. For example, Yousif (male) commented:

*I would disagree with Ahmed. I would assume that the curriculum has been designed by professionals using the most sophisticated developments in the field. Ahmed should work on improving his teaching skills and follow the new cutting-edge developments in the area. He should adapt himself to these teaching skill requirements.*

Ali's reaction to the vignette is more sympathetic. He appreciates Ahmed's feelings and understands the problem. However, he disagrees with Ahmed's views. Ali advocates independent learning, saying:

*I do not completely agree with all of what Ahmed is saying. I think he needs to understand that students must work hard as well … they must work hard for themselves, they are the ones who will use what they learn in their life not the teacher.*

Jalal (male) believes that what Ahmed was saying is true. However, he also advises that teachers must be open to new teaching and learning techniques to enhance English education. He said:

*Ahmed is right that it is not easy to implement the new curriculum. However, Ahmed should also accommodate new approaches and views of learning as the way he was taught does not seem to help him cope with the current situation.*

As mentioned earlier, such opinions are consistent with a progressive view of education. This position is indicated by the teachers' use of terms such as "sophisticated development" (to refer to the present curriculum), "modernised teaching", "not to give the ready-prepared knowledge", "students work independently", or "students must work hard for themselves".

Overall, the data related to the above two vignettes seem to confirm that most of the participants agreed with a progressive philosophy of English education. This was also evident from the findings that derived from a sub-question for Vignette 2: *How do you find using the new strategies and methods in teaching?* Almost all of the teachers (n=7) reported that they found the current teaching methods useful. A few teachers, however, including those who also favoured progressive education, considered the current teaching methods to be difficult to apply in practice. This is conveyed in the following statements:

*When I taught the new materials, I had no idea what I was doing because I had not had any courses on teaching practice or the new curriculum. So, I must have used something based on intuition and experience as a learner rather than based on a rationale or philosophy.* (Jalal, male)

*It's sometimes hard to choose or use one because of the way that we've been taught.* (Fadeel, male)

*The teaching methods are not easy to apply in the classroom, so I use my own way. It works well I think. There are some barriers to using the new methods including the time.* (Anwar, male)

*Unfortunately, I don't use them as our classrooms are very poor and we don't have the equipment to help us use the new methods, like for example smart boards or data projectors."* (Rafeeq, male)

*The problem is that most of the time we can't use these methods. We are not ready yet to use them.* (Osama)

The last three quotations suggest that the teachers have concerns about using the current English teaching methods. These concerns relate to the barriers which they face in their

classes, including their lack of training, the impact of their previous experience, the time constraints, and the lack of teaching equipment. In the presence of these barriers, it can be very difficult for teachers to adhere to the objectives of the present English curriculum. Hence, it is more likely that the teachers will revert to their own tried and trusted teaching as a backup should they fail to effectively use the current teaching methods. These barriers are also reported in the interview findings in Section 4.2**.**

To support the research findings regarding the teachers' conceptions of progressive education, a third vignette was added. The vignette mainly relates to teachers' general views about the purpose of education. The goal was to compare (and possibly confirm) the replies that the teachers made in relation to the first two vignettes, as well as to enrich the data collected.

#### 5.2.2.3 Vignette 3: Purpose of Education

In this vignette (see Appendix C), the teachers were asked the following question: *Which views do you agree with? Why?*

Interestingly, although the majority of the participating teachers were in favour of Learner-Centred Ideology of education (progressive education ideology), they also agreed with Scholar Academic Ideology (where accumulated knowledge is to be taught) and Social Efficiency Ideology (where creating an effective society is the goal of education). All of these concepts were discussed in depth in Chapter 2. For example, Rafeeq (male) appeared to agree with the principles of Scholar Academic Ideology when he said:

*I believe we must teach our children what we think is important for them because this is their future and they have to know the past so that they can know the future. We have to teach our kids our culture and religion because this is important for their social lives.*

Like Rafeeq, Anwar (male) believed that the purpose of education is to help students to learn the knowledge that is accepted by the culture as being important for their lives. He said:

*I also want to educate my students to introduce them to the best that has been known, and help them acquire knowledge and culture for their own good. I think that by doing this, my students will be happy in their lives.*

Other teachers expressed beliefs about education that corresponded more closely to Social Efficiency Ideology. For example, Ali (male) said:

*We need to prepare a good generation. A generation that will be able to live adult lives. A good generation will build a very good society and will help the country eventually.*

Osama (male) expressed similar views:

*Students need to be prepared for adult life to know what adult life is like, what to expect and to know the good and bad about adult life. They will become effective members of their society and fight evil.*

Like Ali and Osama (male), Belgasem (male) also believed that education should include the teaching of morals to build a good society. He said:

*We have to teach our students morals to be good people in society.*

When seeking the participants' views on the purposes of education, there is some evidence to suggest that many of them held not only the principles of Learner-Centred Ideology but also those of Scholar Academic Ideology and Social Efficiency Ideology. Such variation in their perspectives of education may elucidate why many of the teachers' classroom practices were affected by such perspectives. Equally, the teachers' practices may also be affected by other barriers, which will be reported and discussed further in the following section.

The next section reports the findings derived from the two sets of interviews and the classroom observations. First, I will present the findings of the two sets of interviews (main and follow-up). The findings will be presented in relation to the main themes identified from my data analysis (e.g. attitudes to becoming a teacher, perceptions about the present curriculum, and perceptions about CLT). Then, I will present the findings derived from the participants' classroom observations. The findings of the classroom observation will be presented according to the items/checklists that I created for obtaining the data. The data suggest that there are significant barriers to implementing the present English curriculum. These barriers relate to several key issues, including the lack of teacher education, the lack of professional development programmes, teachers' beliefs, contextual barriers, and organisational barriers. The sub-barriers will also be presented. Table 11 shows some examples of how the themes and sub-themes arose from my data coding.

**Table 11:** Themes and sub-themes derived from the first interview

| Examples of the identified codes | Themes and sub-themes developed from the codes |
|---|---|
| • *'I like teaching and I always wanted to be a teacher. Also, teaching is the best job and the only job you can get after you finish your university. It is like a map, you study, you graduate and then you teach.'* | • Attitudes towards becoming an English language teacher<br>  • Teaching as the only job |
| • *'The new curriculum is difficult, but it is more powerful and useful. The problem is that we still can't teach it.*<br>• *"I have studied teaching methodologies but there wasn't any practical side of it. I have received nothing regarding how to teach."*<br>• *'I didn't attend the training sessions, but a friend of mine told me that it was only a one-week training course and that is silly because it is insufficient and incomplete.'* | • General perceptions about the present English language curriculum<br>  • The lack of teacher education<br>  • The lack of professional development |
| • *'I explain everything to my students. They do the homework. This is my role and by doing this, they will become good students.'* | • Beliefs about teaching and learning<br>  • Beliefs about their role as teachers |
| • *'There was no preparation for us to receive the new curriculum. I was asked to teach the curriculum as it is and to use the teacher handbook.'* | • Beliefs about the dissemination process |

**Table 12:** Themes and sub-themes derived from the second interview

| Examples of the identified codes | Themes and sub-themes developed from the codes |
|---|---|
| • *'Students' learning today is worse than ever before. The new curriculum is far beyond their learning abilities.'*<br>• *'Parents look at us as experts with the right knowledge of the English language and our task is to teach their children that knowledge.'*<br>• *'I always have a problem conducting group work activities because I don't have suitable desks that can help me do this activity. All of the desks here are very traditional desks.'*<br>• *"Time is important, and 45 minutes is too little, and remember you need to teach the four skills not the writing* | • Perceptions about CLT<br>  • Beliefs about students' competence<br>  • Beliefs about local culture<br>  • Beliefs about physical constraints<br>  • Beliefs about organisational constraints |

**Table 13:** Themes and sub-themes derived from the classroom observation

| Examples of the criterion/behaviour to be observed | Observed behaviour |
|---|---|
| The use of CLT | • CLT is almost non-existent |
| The use of relevant teaching methods | • Traditional methods used<br>  • Grammar Translation Method (GMT) |
| Access to teaching aids | • Teachers had no access |
| The use of the teacher's guidebook in relation to lesson preparation and initiation | • No teachers used the guidebook |
| The teaching of grammar | • Traditional teaching approaches<br>  • Explicit grammar teaching<br>  • Examples given in Arabic to explain grammatical rule |
| Teaching reading, writing, speaking and listening | • Reading<br>  • No commitment to reading stages<br>• Writing<br>  • Task skipped and/or given as homework<br>• Speaking<br>  • Almost non-existent<br>• Listening<br>  • Listening activity skipped |

Now, I will proceed to outline in detail the findings in relation to the themes and sub-themes presented in the tables above.

## 5.3 Interviews: Teachers' Backgrounds

This theme entails two sub-themes, namely, the participants' attitudes towards becoming an English language teacher and the participants' teaching backgrounds. The two sub-themes are discussed in relation to their influences on the participants' behaviour in the classroom.

### 5.3.1 Participants' Attitudes Towards Becoming an English Language Teacher

With the exception of Rafeeq and Omar, all of the participants had wanted to enter the teaching profession for various reasons that will be discussed in the following sections (had Omar wanted to become a doctor, but he was forced to go into teaching, while Belgasem chose teaching because it was the only career available to him). In Omar's case, he was forced (although he did not say so explicitly) to study at teacher preparation college to become a teacher. He had dreamed of becoming a doctor, but, perhaps for cultural reasons, he was not able to achieve his dream. He said:

*My father wanted me to be a teacher. I actually didn't want to be a teacher. I wanted to study medicine and be a doctor and I felt that being a doctor I could achieve a lot of what I dreamed of doing. I respect teachers and I know that teaching is a good career, but I really wanted to be a doctor.*

All of the other participants, including Rafeeq, held the view that teaching was the only career that they could apply for. This is because of the lack of the career options; thus, teachers considered teaching as the 'last resort' (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007, p. 10). Among the comments that the participant teachers made with respect to teaching being the last option, Ali (male) said:

*…Also, teaching is the best job and the only job you can get after you finish university. It is like following a map, you study, you graduate and then you teach.*

Osama (male) had similar views to Ali; but it was his interest in teaching that made him join the teaching force:

*I choose teaching because it was the only job I could get after graduation. But also, I like teaching English as well … I like talking about English. I love teaching English. I like people to learn from me. I have knowledge and I want to share this knowledge with everyone, not only my students.*

In addition, the employment system for teachers in the country seems to discourage some teachers. One essential requirement is that, prior to employment, teachers must agree that they will teach in a remote school (roughly 300km away) in an area where there are not enough teachers. This can have a great impact on people's willingness to go into teaching

because of the long travels that they would have to make almost every day to reach the school. On top of this practical challenge, traveling long distances where there is a lack of reliable transportation services could involve danger (accidents, etc.), which may affect their arrival times and hence they might risk missing classes. Besides the fact that he did not want to be a teacher, Rafeeq (male) also complained about the distance that he had to travel to reach the school:

*I began teaching around 15 years ago in another city. I had to teach there because one of the conditions of being a teacher is that you teach in another place that can be up to 300km away. This is very difficult for me as this is a long journey, especially when we don't have good transportation to take us there. This can make teachers unhappy with teaching.*

Despite expressing complaints about a few negative issues, the participants' overall positive attitudes of the profession were apparent from their responses. Although they considered teaching the only possible career, the teachers expressed their willingness to teach and their happiness with the job. However, when it came to the actual teaching, the teachers appeared to face some serious constraints. The following section presents the findings relating to these constraints.

### 5.3.2 Perceptions of the Present English Language Curriculum

The findings presented in this section will relate to Question and Sub-question 1: *How do Libyan teachers perceive the present curriculum? What views do they hold about the reform?* Almost all of the participants expressed an interest in and positive attitudes towards the present curriculum, especially its content and the new teaching methods. This is interesting because the participant teachers were likely to have received traditional educations at their universities. As a university English language teacher myself, I can confirm that we follow a product-based approach to English language teaching. This influenced my thinking about school English language teachers. Prior to conducting my study, I expected to discover opposing attitudes towards the present English language curriculum. I assumed that teachers would complain strongly about the present curriculum and argue that something should be done to revert to the old curriculum. But my pre-assumptions were not valid and what I came to understand, in fact, was quite the opposite. I realised that almost all of my research participants expressed an interest in teaching the present curriculum. They stressed the importance of independent learning and the benefits it brings to their students. However,

although they held positive attitudes regarding the underpinning philosophy and recommended practices of the present English curriculum, the participants expressed concerns with respect to actually teaching it. Their major concerns about the present curriculum related to the fact that it is difficult to teach. For example, Anwar (male) noted:

*The new curriculum is difficult, but it is more powerful and useful. The problem is that we still can't teach it.*

Ali (male) had similar reservations about the difficulty of teaching the present curriculum:

*There are things which the teacher understands more than the person who made this curriculum because we know our school and students. The curriculum is not bad at all but difficult to teach.*

The difficulties of teaching the present curriculum are due to certain factors. The findings from the interviews suggest that the participants' classroom practices are affected by two main factors: (1) insufficient teacher education during their university education; (2) insufficient professional development to help them teach the present English language curriculum.

### 5.3.3 The Lack of Teacher Education

All of the participants appreciated the importance of teacher education and believed that it can change their views as well as their understandings of teaching. Rafeeq (male), for example, believed that pre-service teacher education could have helped him eliminate his fear of teaching. He said:

*I believe that it is very important. It can encourage us to teach and to eliminate any fear regarding teaching.*

Jalal (male) had similar beliefs to Rafeeq about pre-service teacher education. He stated that teacher education could help him learn more about teaching and new teaching methods. He said:

*No doubt, it is very important to have such preparation courses so that we know how to go about teaching and know the new teaching methods.*

However, most of the participants raised concerns about the lack of pre-service teacher education during their university education. The participants' responses suggest that teacher education there is almost non-existent. For example, Osama (male) complained that he had not received education with respect to English language teaching:

*I studied teaching methodologies but there wasn't any practical side of it. I received nothing regarding how to teach.*

The above statement suggests that English language teachers are provided with insufficient pre-service education. This seems to have impacted the teachers' perceived abilities to implement the present English language curriculum. As the present curriculum is progressive and learner-centred, it requires teachers to adopt new teaching approaches. It can be very difficult for teachers to adopt new teaching approaches when there are no opportunities for teachers to learn, understand, think about, and adopt these approaches.

### 5.3.4 Lack of Professional Development

The participants' primary concern was the quantity and quality of the professional development that they received for implementing the present English curriculum. Regarding quantity, the participants believed that the professional development sessions provided at the time of implementation were insufficient. Five of the participants commented on this:

*There was only a one-week introductory course, which was nothing in terms of duration to be honest.* (Rafeeq, male)

*I didn't attend the training sessions, but a friend of mine told me that it was only a one-week training course and that is silly because it is insufficient and incomplete.* (Jalal, male)

*They gave us short sessions about what the new curriculum contains and that is it, no more no less.* (Majeed, male)

*It was given for only three days to cover the whole new curriculum, which is useless because they didn't cover the whole curriculum and many parts of it were ignored and I don't know why.* (Omar, male)

In addition to issues about the quantity of the professional development they received, there was an issue regarding non-attendance, as Jalal mentioned above. It can also be argued that if such training sessions are insufficient in terms of duration, teachers might not attend, or

perhaps will not attend future sessions (discussed briefly later). All of the participant teachers also referred to issues with the quality of the sessions. Their concerns were captured in the following statements:

*It was poor quality and the trainers didn't even show us how to teach. They only showed us the objectives of the new curriculum. I think they did this just to be able to say "we have done something" and escape accountability.* (Osama, male)

*The training course, the support given was too weak and lacks a practical side. We needed to do some mock teaching before moving on to actual teaching.* (Jalal, male)

Moreover, some participant teachers raised concerns about the venues and times of the short training course that they received. For example, Anwar (male) complained about the timing of the sessions that he was required to attend:

*I think there was one but I missed it … The course started at 3 o'clock in the afternoon which is not suitable for me because I return from school at 1:30 and I feel tired and want to relax for at least five hours before I am able to do more work on teaching. Plus it only lasted for seven days and that is it.*

The inappropriate timing was not the only contextual issue making teachers unwilling to attend these training courses. The poor conditions of the venues in which these courses took place was another cause for concern. For example, Rafeeq (male) was disappointed with the venue in which he attended the training course:

*…it took place outside the school and in summer and you know summer here is very hot. There was no air-conditioning or cold water to drink, but the worst thing is the electricity. The light went off many times, so we needed to use an electricity generator, which was very noisy. It was very loud and very disturbing, and many teachers did not complete the course. That was the only course that we took.*

The lack of teacher education and professional development seems to have had a considerable impact on the teachers' acceptance of the present English curriculum, and, hence, on their classroom practice. Britten (1988) made a good point in relation to the rejection of new teaching practices when he suggested that the less awareness of the usefulness and value of a certain method that teachers have, the more likely they are to reject it. What we can understand from the teachers' statements is that they were not made aware of

the usefulness and value of the new teaching method suggested in the present English language curriculum in Libya. The implications of this for teachers are that they are less likely to accept and adopt the new teaching practices.

It is worth noting that these training courses are given outside of schools, as Rafeeq noted. It is widely recognised that continuous professional development or in-service training courses should be school-based to help teachers refresh their knowledge and pedagogical practice and to encourage the exchange of ideas among teachers in their own school (Armour and Yelling, 2004, Day and Sachs, 2004, Boaduo, 2010, Galanouli, 2010, Ho et al., 2016). This might imply that training courses which are conducted outside of a school context are less likely to be effective. However, school conditions must also be organised and managed in such a way as to ensure the effectiveness of training courses and school managers need to consider teachers' professional development not merely as an add-on activity, but rather as a continuous and an essential part of overall school improvement (Sayed et al., 2018).

### 5.3.5 Perceptions About Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Data reported in the following sections will relate to questions 2 and 3 and their sub-questions; *What are the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of dissemination the innovation?; How do they implement CLT policies imposed by the reform in their classrooms?; What constraints do teachers encounter in establishing a CLT environment?* The present English language curriculum is based on the principles of communicative language teaching and cooperative learning. Teachers and students are expected to take on new classroom roles that differ from their old traditional roles. In this curriculum, teachers are expected to take a facilitating, monitoring role, while learners are expected to take the role of negotiators who are required to listen to their peers, join in with group work or pair work, and reflect on their own learning. Although almost all of the teachers expressed an interest in teaching the present English language curriculum (as evidenced by their responses to the vignettes and to the interview questions), they seemed to find it challenging to assume their new responsibilities. Firstly, they believed that there were many physical and organisational constraints that make CLT difficult to implement. But more importantly, the teachers seemed to be affected by the beliefs that they held about the roles that they and their students should play in the classroom, as well as by their beliefs about students' weak independent learning abilities and about the local social culture. The following section will

first present the different types of beliefs that teachers hold about CLT, before moving on to present the physical and organisational constraints reported by the participant teachers.

### 5.3.6 Participants' Beliefs About Teachers' and Learners' Roles in the CLT Classroom

Beliefs about teaching and learning include beliefs about teachers' and students' roles, beliefs about students' learning abilities, and beliefs about the Libyan culture in relation to teaching and learning. During the vignette conversations, almost all of the teachers expressed a positive attitude regarding their students assuming a more independent role, as well as regarding their own roles as facilitators. However, in the interviews, over half of the participant teachers provided contradictory views to those they provided in response to the vignettes. Three participants believed that their role is to transmit the knowledge that they think most beneficial to their students. This reflects the idea of traditional teaching (transmissive approach). For example, Anwar (male) stressed that his role in the classroom is to control and manage students' learning. He said:

*I explain everything to my students. They do the homework. This is my role and by doing this, they will become good students.*

Similar views were expressed by Yousif (male) and Omar (male):

*I think the teacher's role is to help their students and transmit the knowledge to their students in a good way and that can be done by developing themselves by attending some high-quality training sessions.* (Yousif)

*Teachers have to pay attention to their students and support them in their learning and teach them all that is important to them.* (Omar)

In discussing their beliefs about the student's role, the teachers' voices also demonstrated their agreement with practising traditional teaching methods. Some of the participants even suggested that their students' role in the class is to sit quietly and consume the knowledge passed down to them by their teachers. Such traditional views might well influence their commitment to teaching the present English curriculum.

Osama (male), for example, asks his students to remain calm and answer his questions during class. He said:

*I ask them to sit quietly and wait for questions from me. This is also their attitude toward me.*

Rafeeq (male) also shared similar views, but he also asks his students to engage in activities that he prepares for them. He said:

*Students sit quietly and participate in most of the activities that I make. I think they like learning in this way.*

The latter quotation suggests that the students themselves like to learn in this way, or, more accurately, that the teachers believe that students will find it interesting learning in this way. This can be due to cultural reasons. In fact, Jalal (male) alludes to this in his response. He believes that the students' learning styles are largely affected by their learning culture. In his words:

*Most of the students just want to sit and write down notes from the board and that is it. This is because of their learning culture. I mean, in other subjects which are still taught in Arabic, like physics or history, students are like empty vessels filled with information by their teachers. This also has an impact on the English language lesson as students expect me, as they expect other teachers, to teach them everything. So, learner autonomy is a big issue. That is, the students do not rely on themselves at all.*

In addition to expressing traditional views on teachers' and students' roles, some teachers also spoke very favourably about a different classroom role for students. The teacher participants' conceptions of their students' roles as EFL learners included seeing them as collaborative learners, active learners, hard workers, and responsible learners. The following table summarises the participants' views of what their students' roles in the classroom should be.

**Table 14:** Participant teachers' views of their students' roles in the classroom

| Participant teachers | Beliefs about students' role |
|---|---|
| Jalal | *Learners need to participate and think about the knowledge itself instead of just taking the knowledge from the teacher, and [they need] to work collaboratively in the classroom. This is how a good learner must be.* |
| Yousif | *The role of the students is to be active in the class and participate in the group and pair work to enhance their leaning.* |
| Osama | *They need to be more active in language learning and not sit all the time waiting for questions. They must work hard and we have to help them to become the students that we want.* |
| Omar | *I would say that 75% of the learning responsibility lies on the learners' shoulders. They must work hard for themselves. If they don't, no one will do it for them.* |

The quotations presented in the table above suggest that several teachers did indeed hold positive beliefs of progressive education. Jalal viewed his students as collaborative workers who should not be dependent on their teacher. Yousif viewed his students' role as that of active learners who should actively participate in communicative activities to develop their communicative performance. Similarly, Osama and Omar viewed their students' roles as being hard workers and active learners responsible for their own learning. Such views are striking and suggest that the teachers are not in fact traditional in their thinking (as I had expected); although earlier statements made by the same participants seem to contradict their positive views about their students' roles.

It is important to highlight here the previous statement made by Jalal regarding the way other subjects are taught: '*…in other subjects which are still taught in Arabic, like physics or history, students are like empty vessels filled with information by their teachers'.* Jalal's statement is crucial to understanding the issue at hand as it suggests that Libya's curriculum reform was made only with regard to English language education, while other subjects are still being taught traditionally (Merjeen, 2018). This seems to have left English language

teachers as the only ones required to shift from teacher-focused classrooms to more learner-focused ones. This consideration might reduce the impact of these teachers' voices, as no one is likely to listen to their complaints or address their teaching concerns. In fact, what we can learn from Omar's statement about preparing learner-based activities is that his voice regarding the need to overcome his classroom constraints is unheard. He said:

*…You can ask the headteacher why they don't provide us the tools and facilities needed for the new teaching methods. She never listens to us.*

This strongly suggests that Omar and his colleagues do not have enough influence to make their voices heard. Thus, as English is the only part of the curriculum that is reformed and English teachers the only ones who must adopt new teaching practices, this might make it extremely challenging to teach students accustomed to traditional learning methods. Additionally, it might be disappointing for English teachers not to hear their teaching concerns voiced in public since no one else in their schools (i.e. the teachers of other subjects) is expressing these concerns. In short, it would appear that students are more motivated to learn following traditional methods as the time they spend engaged in traditional learning (i.e. in other subjects) is greater than the time that they spend in a more learner-centred context.

#### 5.3.6.1 Teachers' Beliefs About Low-Achieving Learners

Teachers' beliefs about students' poor capacities for independent learning might also influence teachers' classroom practice and hence the overall success of the curriculum reform initiative and objectives (Underwood, 2012, Zhang and Liu, 2014). This seems to be the case in the Libyan context. Views about their students' weak learning abilities seem to have influenced teachers' commitment to adhering to the principles and objectives of the present English language curriculum. For example, Rafeeq (male) believes that weak students do not like the present English curriculum because it is difficult for them. Such perceptions are evident in the excerpt below:

*In this way, the students will hate English because students are not all the same. There are weak and strong students. Hala thinks only about the good students but not about the weak students and this is wrong"*

He goes on to say:

*For English education, it is important that the teacher tries to teach the students the basics of the English language. The teacher must work hard and do their work and teach their students what is essential for them.*

Like Rafeeq, Belgasem (male) and Osama (male) are also worried about their students' learning abilities, as can be observed from their responses:

*Students' learning today is worse than ever before. The new curriculum is far beyond their learning abilities.* (Belgasem)

*I believe that their level is low and I can't use new methods because it is going to be a [waste of] time.* (Osama)

Similar views are also shared by Anwar (male) and Yousif (male), who believe that students have difficulties in reading activities due to their weaknesses in the subject. Despite this, they make the efforts to conduct the activity. They said:

*Because they are still not good enough at reading, I write the reading passage or the dialogue between two persons on the board. I write the whole thing on the board and then I read that to them using my pointing stick so that they know where I am because if I don't point it out, they will get lost. They take more time to know where I am on the board. The whole thing takes a lot of time, but I have to do this.* (Anwar)

*I do not teach listening and writing and do not do group or pair work because the large class size and my students' low level [make it challenging] to work in pairs or groups to do some activities. The students are concerned with learning word meaning and understanding grammar.* **(Yousif)**

These teachers are expressing similar beliefs about students who experience difficulties in learning. The teachers blame the learners and do not attribute their learning difficulties to the broader context or what these teachers could do to help the learners. The participant teachers seem to have little confidence in their students' learning abilities. In other words, they do not seem to believe that every student can learn, and they do not believe that they can intervene to help the learners overcome their learning weaknesses. It seems that they view the students as the ones to blame for being unsuccessful learners. However, as reported by Rafeeq, the students seem to lack the basics for English language learning, such as a knowledge of the English alphabet or knowing correct spelling and pronunciation. This implies that the

students are not yet ready to move on to more complex learning until they have mastered the basics for English language learning. Indeed, this conforms with behaviourist views of learning, which emphasise that prior to introducing complex higher-order learning tasks, learners need to first master the simple and lower-order thinking tasks (further elaboration is presented in the discussion chapter).

It is apparent that Anwar's beliefs about his students' learning abilities made him opt for a traditional teaching approach. This also made him concerned about the time allocated for his class – the time is short, and if he teaches with a learner-centred approach, he will not sufficiently cover the materials in the students' course book. Such inherent beliefs about students' weak learning abilities do not only serve as a barrier to communicative teaching, they can also potentially affect the delivery and completion of the whole curriculum.

#### 5.3.6.2 Teachers' Beliefs About the Local Culture

Regarding the impact of the local social culture on English language teaching and learning, many of the participant teachers expressed their concerns. They stressed how they are seen by their society as knowledge holders and classroom managers, and that they are responsible for transferring that knowledge to their children. Rafeeq (male) said:

*Parents look at us as experts with the right knowledge of the English language, and our task is to teach their children that knowledge.*

Similarly, Ali (male) and many others were concerned about the image that people have of teachers' duties in the class. They said:

*The image in people's minds is that the teachers are the source of information. There are a few parents who are well-educated and who think that the students must work hard as well, but the majority depend on the teachers for everything and they always blame us for their children's [lack of] achievement.*

Moreover, the teachers talked about other cultural barriers to implementing CLT, among which are certain religious barriers. Many teachers attributed the failure of group activities to the students, especially the girls, being unwilling to participate in these activities. Rafeeq commented that this lack of willingness was due to the fact that the female students believed that speaking to boys was culturally and religiously unacceptable. He said:

*The group work activity did not work because my students don't want these activities, especially the girls, because they are very shy, and maybe they don't want to talk to boys because their families do not allow them to do so. You know our culture and religion. Families are very conservative. So, I skip this activity all the time.*

Such cultural views are not only common in the society as a whole, but also among teachers, who often share similar beliefs about girl-boy interactions. For example, Ali believes that girls should not make direct contact with boys, even for educational purposes. He firmly stated:

*I don't include girls and boys in one activity because I am against this for religious reasons. Also, girls and boys don't like that.*

### 5.3.7 Physical and Organisational Constraints to Employing CLT

The observational findings confirmed by the follow-up interviews suggest that there are many constraints to employing CLT in the participant teachers' classrooms. These constrains were captured during the teaching observations. The constraints are mainly contextual, ranging from poor physical conditions in the classrooms, such as unsuitable desks and broken doors and windows, to matters relating to organisational issues, such the large class sizes and inappropriate class schedules. But, more importantly, the participant teachers raised concerns about the ineffectiveness of the dissemination of the present English language curriculum. The latter issue might be linked to the lack of professional development offered to the teachers in my research context, where teachers received insufficient support to learn about the latest curriculum improvements.

#### 5.3.7.1 The Curriculum Dissemination Process

The findings from the data were similar to those from previous research studies and suggest that the participant teachers received little or no introductory training to familiarise them with the present English language curriculum. Some teachers reported that they were simply asked to teach the curriculum. For example, Anwar (male) said:

*There was no preparation for us when we received the new curriculum. I was asked to teach the curriculum as it is and to use the teacher's handbook.*

Others reported that the present curriculum was introduced to them through several short programmes. After these short programmes had ended, teachers were required to pass on what they had learned in the programmes to their fellow teachers. For example, Majeed (male) said:

*They gave us short sessions about what the new curriculum contains and that is it, no more no less. After their completion, they asked us to transfer what we had learned from this programme to our fellow teachers.*

This very much resembles a cascade model of curriculum dissemination, as has been discussed in detail in literature, which has been criticised from different angles. Arguably, having no prior knowledge of the new curriculum's philosophy and practices can exert too much pressure on the teachers to adhere to its objectives. Furthermore, it can affect students' motivation to learn a foreign language as the teachers might end up misusing the suggested new teaching practices, and in turn complicate or negatively affect the students' learning experiences.

#### 5.3.7.2 Physical Constraints

Physical constraints such as unsuitable/traditional desks or a lack of equipment needed for listening and speaking practice seem to have influenced the teachers' practice. Perhaps, what was most affected by the physical constraints were pair work activities and speaking tasks. For example, Jalal (male) finds it difficult to carry out these activities due to a lack of suitable desks. He said:

*I always have a problem conducting group work activities because I don't have good desks that can help me do these activities. All of the desks here are very traditional desks.*

Similar complaints were made by other teachers, like Omar, who skipped pair work activities due to the condition of the students' desks. He said:

*The classroom layout is not suitable for such activities at all. The desks are very old and are arranged in rows. We need some round tables, so [the students] can face one another and can discuss questions.*

During the classroom observations, the listening and speaking activities were largely skipped by the teachers or were carried out by the teacher himself. When the participants were asked

in the follow-up interview about their reasons for skipping these activities, they stressed that without appropriate infrastructure for teaching listening and speaking, working on these two skills was almost impossible. They blamed the educational authority for not providing the equipment required. The major constraints that they faced included a lack of listening labs. Rafeeq said:

*We don't have enough equipment for conducting listening activities, even though students want to listen to English. Some teachers bring their own players to play the recording, but this is a stupid idea, I think, because it is not loud enough.*

#### 5.3.7.3 Organisational Constraints

Organisational constraints were also reported by most of the teachers as barriers to their teaching. These mainly included the short class times, the large class sizes, and the examination system set out by the country's educational authority.

Almost all of the participants raised concerns about the lack of time allocated for English classes. The class duration ranged between 40 and 45 minutes, which most of the participants felt was insufficient. This had a great impact on their teaching, especially when it came to teaching listening, speaking and writing, and it often led to them skipping working on these skills.

Although the participant teachers were aware of the lack of listening labs for listening activities, they were also aware of the short time allocated to English classes. Jalal (male), for example, said:

*We must have good listening labs to practise listening. Not only this, we need more time. Time is everything I think.*

Similarly, Yousif (Male) and Omar (male) said:

*How can we teach listening when we don't have the right tools to do so? We need listening labs and more time. The time is too short [to include] such curriculum content.* (Yousif, male)

*Listening activities need a suitable place and extra time for it to be conducted successfully. It is very difficult to do listening activities.* (Omar, male)

Additionally, the participant teachers expressed their concerns about the time limitations for writing activities, as a result, most of them found it difficult to finish these activities. Rafeeq (male) and others clearly expressed this view when they said:

*I believe that writing is important, but I don't have the time to do it in class … that is why they should do it as homework.* (Rafeeq)

*Time is important, and 45 minutes is too little, and remember you need to teach the four skills, not just writing.* (Belgasem)

*As you know, the time is short and I can't do all of the tasks in this time, so I give them the rest as a homework activity.* (Osama)

The above concerns regarding the time limitations for conducting writing tasks are very similar to the participants' concerns about speaking practice. Time was frequently referred to as a barrier to doing speaking tasks. For example, Rafeeq (male) said:

*…we come back to the time limit. 45 minutes is too little for me to carry out speaking activities along with other activities.*

The participants' complaints about the insufficient time allocated for covering these different materials can be justified by the large number of students in each English class. Indeed, the participant teachers frequently expressed concerns about the large class sizes. The findings from classroom observations suggest that the teachers skipped some materials either to fit in with the time allocated, or due to the large number of students in the class, or as a result of their beliefs about these materials. Such findings are confirmed by most of the teachers' responses in the follow-up interviews. For example, Osama (male) struggled to include many different activities because of the large number of students in his class. He said:

*I have almost 40 students in my class. How do you think I can finish these pair work activities in 45 minutes with this number of students? Let's talk reality.*

Like Rafeeq, Omar (male) believed that it is important to have smaller class sizes in order for communicative activities to be successful. He said:

*…but more importantly, a small number of students is required to make such activities successful.*

Moreover, the examination system in the country is incongruent with the objectives of the present English curriculum. By and large, the English examinations are not designed to test all of the students' language skills. They basically test students' grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension. The other three language skills (speaking, reading and writing) are not tested. The participant teachers' actual practice in relation to teaching these skills seems to have been affected by the exams as they taught what was to be tested in the exam, while ignoring other contents of the curriculum. This conclusion was drawn from the views expressed by the participants about the examination system in their schools. For example, Yousif contended that:

*there is also a question of how we can assess their listening skills in the exam. I don't believe that this is the right time to teach listening. When the exam system changes, then we can think of teaching listening.*

Belgasem (male) will not teach materials that will not be assessed in the exam. He stressed:

*If the examination doesn't involve assessment of other skills, I will not teach them in the class.*

Ali (male) shares a similar opinion about teaching subjects that will not be tested in the exams:

*I know that listening and skills other than grammar will not be included in the exam. So, most of the time, I neglect to teach them for this reason.*

The teaching of listening skills is largely affected by the preparations in place for these activities. The lack of teaching and learning facilities, such as dedicated listening labs, is likely to prevent teachers from adhering to the contents, and hence the objectives, of the present English curriculum. More importantly, it might make no sense for teachers to teach something that will not be tested in the exam. It seems that teachers as well as students are concerned about what will be tested and how it will be tested, and if their concerns are ignored, listening activities are also likely to be neglected.

## 5.4 Observational Data

With the teachers' positive attitudes towards CLT and learner-centred learning in mind, the researcher expected to observe some CLT practices in the classroom. The observations showed, however, that the CLT innovation was not being implemented in the way required

by the official curriculum document. During classroom observations, no participant teachers used CLT. The following sections provide details of the findings.

During classroom observations, I initially endeavoured to find out if the teachers had a good command of the subject matter. This was important since the materials included in the present curriculum arguably require a qualified teacher to teach them; therefore, a lack of knowledge and English skills might lead to ineffective teaching and learning. In this regard, all of the participant teachers showed a very good knowledge of the subject matter. Interestingly, however, the majority of the teachers pronounced some words incorrectly. I did not investigate this further because doing so may have embarrassed the teachers - something I did not want to happen.

I also aimed to find out if the teachers used the teaching methods advised by the curriculum. What I observed confirms what all of the teachers said in the interviews in relation to the availability of teaching aids (such as round tables, pictures, maps or computers). I found that the teachers had no access to the teaching aids they believed to be important, for instance, for helping their learners improve their reading comprehension skills, for illustrating concepts, or for relieving anxiety by giving information in a new and exciting way. The implication of this finding for the teachers was that they reverted to their traditional teaching methods.

In observing how the teachers started and managed their lessons, I made an effort to pay attention to the teachers' attempts to establish a classroom environment that was conductive to learning. Likewise, it was worth noting whether the teachers followed the teacher's guide book in relation to lesson initiation. For example, did the teachers' start their lessons, particularly the reading lessons, as recommended by their guide books? Notably, it was observed that no teachers used the guide book. (The guide book was not even to be found on their tables). The teachers tended to skip both the pre- and post-reading activities (against the strong recommendations of the guide book). Instead, they all jumped to the reading passage, gave word meanings in Arabic, and had their students take turns reading the passages. There were also students who were not given a chance to read the passage.

It is crucial to learn whether pair/group work activities were initiated and completed by the teachers themselves, and, if so, how the teachers encouraged student participation. It is worth noting that a few teachers did in fact attempt to conduct pair/group work activities. However, despite Rafeeq (male) trying to set up some group work activities, his students did not show

much interest in participating. Consequently, Rafeeq ended up asking direct questions about the things that were supposed to be learned through the students' collaborative work activities.

In relation to the teaching of grammar, I aimed to explore whether the teachers followed the plan outlined by the present curriculum (i.e. that grammar is to be taught implicitly). In teaching grammar, all of the teachers were observed to be using a traditional teaching approach. Grammar rules were provided explicitly, with isolated examples and almost always in Arabic. That is, the teachers taught grammatical rules and then applied those rules by translating sentences from English into Arabic and vice-versa. Then, the teachers asked direct questions to check their students' understanding of the given grammatical rule(s).

I also observed how teachers started their listening activities, what aids were used, to what extent the teacher respected the aims of the listening activities, and how the teacher engaged students in the activities. In all of the classes I observed, the listening activities were skipped. Likewise, the writing activities were also skipped, but almost all of the participants set the task for homework instead.

In terms of the teaching of speaking, I wished to explore what language the teachers used, how they explained the activities to their students, and what the students did in the activities. I noticed that almost all of the participants gave few opportunities for their students to engage in the speaking activities (students were given some pictures to describe and discuss). Some teachers did in fact try to carry out the activities. For example, Omar (male) asked some students to describe one of the pictures. However, the students remained silent and eventually Omar ended up describing the picture himself.

The purpose of observing these classroom activities was essentially to identify whether the teachers were teaching the curriculum and employing CLT and CL. Overall, the observational findings suggest that there are many constraints to employing CLT and CL in the participant teachers' classrooms. These constraints became more evident when the teachers and their students were observed in their natural classroom settings. These classroom environments appear to be contributory factors which exacerbated the many challenges posed by the prescribed English curriculum. Table 12 below summarises the observation findings.

**Table 15:** A summary of the observations of the ten classes

| Participant's Name (pseudonym) | Gender | Teaching experience | Observation length | Observation summary |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Omar | M | 30 years | 45 minutes | • The majority of participants had good knowledge of subject matter.<br>• The majority of participants used traditional teaching methods.<br>• The majority of participants did not use the teacher's guide book.<br>• CLT not used and collaborative activities were very limited; the majority of teachers tried to set up group work activities, but they didn't work as many of the students didn't want to participate.<br>• All participants skipped the listening and writing activities (some writing activities were given as homework). There were very limited speaking activities.<br>• The majority of participants had no commitment to the various reading stages: pre-, while- and post-reading<br>• The majority of participants taught grammar traditionally: using many examples on the board in Arabic to explain the rule.<br>• All participants gave word meanings in the traditional way: in Arabic.<br>• The majority of participants used English as a means of instruction from time to time, but Arabic was the dominant language for all of the activities for the majority of teachers. |
| Ali | M | 19 years | 35 minutes | |
| Anwar | M | 19 years | 45 minutes | |
| Jamal | M | 21 years | 40 minutes | |
| Belgasem | M | 20 years | 40 minutes | |
| Majeed | M | 15 years | 35 minutes | |
| Osama | M | 22 years | 45 minutes | |
| Rafeeq | M | 20 years | 45 minutes | |
| Jalal | M | 23 years | 40 minutes | |
| Yousef | M | 23 years | 45 minutes | |

The accounts in this chapter illustrate how Libya's English language teachers implemented and made sense of the present curriculum. Based on the above findings, the current situation

in the country's schools is complex. Although most of the participant teachers consider the present English language curriculum reform to be a positive good step, it clashes with the cultural, organisational, infrastructural, and personal realities which all inhibit its successful implementation.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the key findings in relation to my main research questions: (1) *How do Libyan teachers perceive the present English language curriculum?* (2) *What are the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the dissemination of the present English language curriculum?* (3) *How do Libyan teachers implement the CLT policies imposed by the reform in their classrooms?* However, it is very important to underline that the aims of this research go beyond answering these three questions. This study also attempts to uncover key issues that can shed light on the case under study. In the following chapter, I will employ Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) to interpret and explore the key findings obtained in this research.

# Chapter 6: Discussion

## 6.1 Introduction

The English language curriculum reform in Libya is an important step forward in the country's efforts to enhance its English language education. From the research and evidence around effective language teaching, and from the researcher's perspective as an advocate of progressive language education, the present Libyan English language curriculum is a positive initiative for introducing and supporting communicative teaching and independent learning, rather than adhering to a traditional and teacher-based curriculum. However, as the research findings indicate, the objectives of the current curriculum have not been achieved since it was introduced 18 years ago, and teachers have continued to struggle to implement the curriculum in their respective contexts. The findings of this research study mirror the findings of previous research studies that reported the conflict between policy and practice.

The broad aim of this research study was to close the gap between policy and practice in relation to the implementation of the present English language curriculum in Libya. Although it has been over 18 years since this curriculum was introduced, teachers are still affected by pedagogical as well as non-pedagogical constraints that have made the implementation process difficult. It can therefore be argued that revisiting the current situation remains relevant, with a view not only to reassessing the current state of Libya's English language education, but, more importantly, to inform national policies and practices for the benefit of all stakeholders. This research study originally aimed to answer three main questions: (1) *How do Libyan teachers perceive the present English language curriculum?* (2) *What are the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the introduction of the present English language curriculum?* (3) *How do they implement the CLT policies imposed by the reform in their classrooms?*

It is worth highlighting that these questions aim to acquire a comprehensive understanding of Libya's English language education. This research study also aims to go beyond answering these three questions to identify the key issues that can offer a sound understanding of teachers' perceptions of the present English language curriculum, as well as the primary

cause(s) (if any) that brought into existence the contextual and organisational constraints reported in the findings.

What is new about this research study is that it goes beyond looking at these constraints from the same perspectives as others have done. Instead, it seriously explores what has brought these constraints into existence, considering that they have been inhibiting teachers for almost nineteen years since the reform of the English language curriculum took place. I would argue that this length of time should be more than enough to eliminate the pedagogical obstacles that English language teachers are still confronted with today. So, what is happening there? Why are English language teachers still raising concerns about teaching challenges? How can we explain their concerns? What can we offer to help teachers overcome these concerns? The answers to these questions are intended to provide the reader with a new understanding of the Libyan case in relation to English language teaching and the related learning challenges.

As stated earlier, this research study primarily intends to close the gap between policy and practice in relation to curriculum implementation by exploring and reporting the challenges experienced by teachers, and bringing them to the attention of policy makers, curriculum designers, and universities in Libya to offer immediate remedies to the problem. As a university teacher with a constructivist orientation, I believe that Libyan universities, especially the university at which I teach, can play a crucial role in preparing constructivist school teachers. Prior to that, however, it is imperative to establish a clear and comprehensive picture of the context, as well as of the existing challenges.

With the research questions in mind, this chapter will use Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) to understand and interpret my research findings, as well as identify the key issues that have made Libya's English language teachers' practices incompatible with the objectives of the present curriculum. Moreover, I will use the key elements of CHAT to analyse the specific context of implementing the present English language curriculum and its associated learning and teaching strategies. In doing so, I will identify which contextual factors (teaching the present English language curriculum) refer to tools, rules, community, and division of labour (the four key elements of CHAT). Then, I will discuss these different factors (illustrated by CHAT) in depth in the following sections, as well as additional novel and important findings. The discussion will be linked to the existing body of literature and relevant research studies to enrich the content of this chapter.

## 6.2 CHAT: Theoretical Understandings and Application

Looking at the complexities of the work of English language teachers in Libya through the lens of CHAT may assist in identifying particular issues and areas where changes are necessary. Briefly, and as discussed in Chapter 2, CHAT, with its principles and components (subject, activity, object, tool, community, rules, division of labour), suggests that human actions (teaching in this case) are mediated by various factors. In any educational setting, a teacher (subject) and his/her teaching practice (activity) aimed at the achievement of an intended goal (object) are mediated by physical and mental means (tools), by his/her interaction with people, such as school administrators and curriculum developers (community), by cultural and social artefacts, such as norms, traditions, regulations, and values (rules), and by the way that the task is distributed among the subjects and community members (division of labour). Figure 6 presents the basic concepts of CHAT.

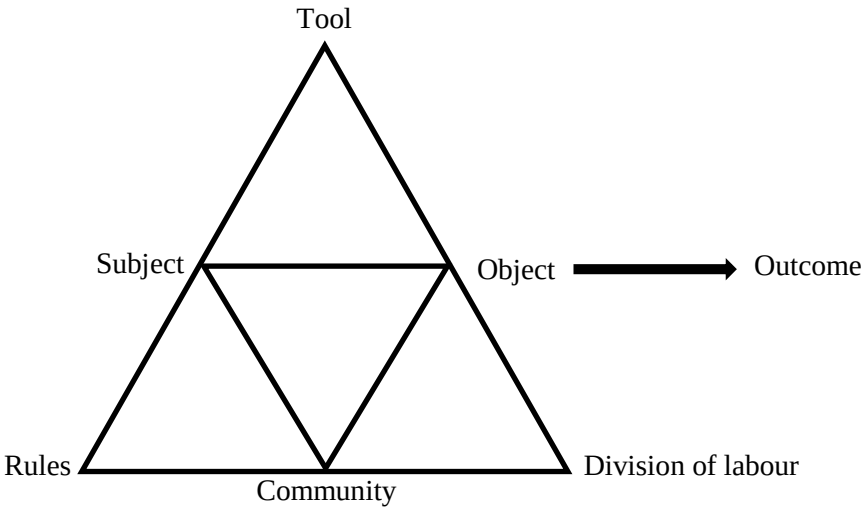



**Figure 6:** Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) basic concept

In this research context, there is evidence to suggest that both physical and mental tools and rules have shaped teachers' activity in relation to the implementation of learner-centred language education. The following sections will give an overview of the findings through the lens of CHAT, followed by an in-depth discussion of the findings. Figure 7 below presents an analysis of the activity system of implementing learner-centred language education (particularly CLT) in Libya.

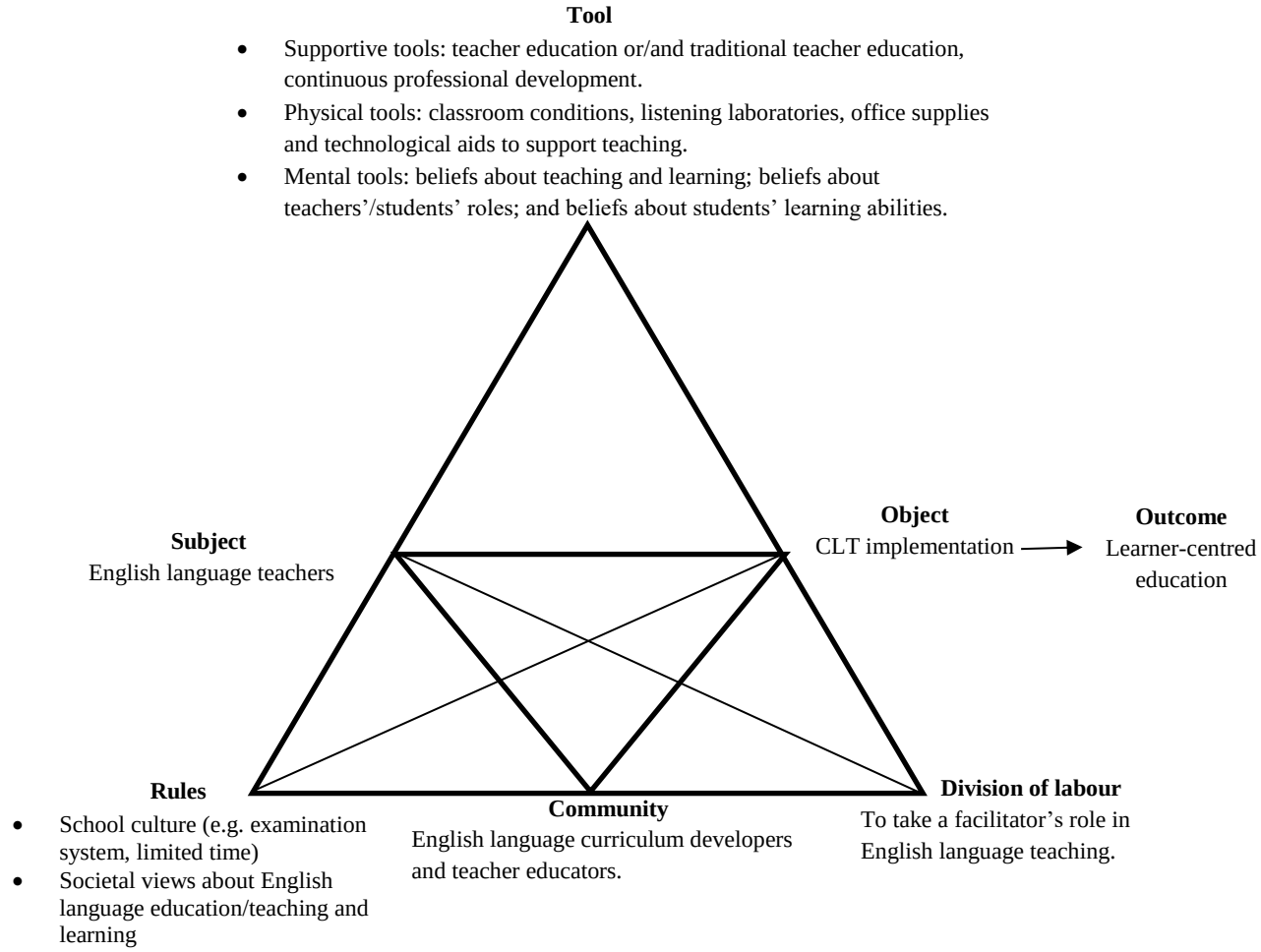



**Figure 7**: Activity System: prior to CLT implementation

The following sections will provide an in-depth discussion of the findings in light of CHAT and its elements to support interpretation and to enrich the discussion. To make the discussion clearer, the structure of the following sections is presented in Figure 8 below.

**Figure** 8: Structure of the discussion

Supportive tools (identified mediating artefact - discussed in **Section 6.3** – main heading) this section includes:
- Teacher Education (discussed in **Section 6.3.1** – sub-heading)
- Professional development (discussed in **Section 6.3.2** – sub-heading)
- Physical tools (discussed in **Section 6.3.3** – sub-heading)
- Organisational Tools (discussed in **Section 6.3.4** – sub-heading)
- Mental Tools (discussed in **Section 6.3.5** – sub-heading)

Rules (identified mediating artefact – discussed in **Section 6.4** – main heading)
Community and Division of Labour (identified mediating artefact- discussed in **Section 6.5** - main heading)

## 6.3 Supportive Tools

Using CHAT as a lens, I use the term "support tools" to refer to the means of teacher preparation to meet the demands of adopting and implementing the learner-centred English language education underpinning the present English language curriculum. It can be argued that teacher education and teacher professional development are two key tools for preparing effective school teachers. As my research findings suggest, despite their evident importance, they are almost non-existent in Libya. This finding might help elucidate some of the significant issues associated with Libya's curricular reform, which started about two decades ago.

The participant teachers appear to have had differing views about the current English language curriculum. They perceived the current English language curriculum to be difficult to teach, and hence to implement, because there has not been the adequate preparation (either through prior or in-service preparation courses) that is deemed important for successful curriculum reform implementation (Crandall, 2000, Darling-Hammond, 2006, Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 2011, Banks and Banks, 2013). The teachers raised various concerns about their inadequate preparation, primary among which were the lack of teacher education during their university education and the lack of professional development or in-service training to support their teaching. Such concerns seem to be common in other countries, too (Darling-Hammond, 2000). However, a finding which challenged my previous conceptions about English language teachers in Libya is that the Libyan teachers seemed to

have very positive beliefs about the present English language curriculum and the educational philosophy underlying it.

When I began this research project, I held the belief that all of the participant teachers were "traditional" teachers; that is, classroom managers, knowledge holders, and transmitters of knowledge (Khani and Hajizadeh, 2016, Richards and Rodgers, 2014). I believed that Libya's English language teachers were responsible for the failure of the implementation of the English language curriculum because of their negative beliefs about learner-centred language education. However, the data from the vignettes and the main interviews challenged these assumptions. Several participant teachers expressed an interest in teaching the current English language curriculum. They felt positively about progressive English language education. Many of the teachers were even observed trying to provide communicative activities; but due to certain constraints, they could not sustain these activities (see also Chapter 5). Consequently, these activities came to be assigned as individual homework, whereas they were supposed to be completed in class in groups. Although, the teachers in this study were generally positively inclined towards the ideas contained in the present English language curriculum, they faced huge pressures that prevented them from translating these ideas into practice.

To begin with, language teacher education, especially in the early stages of the participant teachers' university education, was a primary concern for all of the teachers. They understood that teacher education was an essential tool to support their teaching. Although they generally believed in the importance of teacher training as a supportive tool for successful teaching, the findings suggest that the teachers received almost no teacher training during the last year of their university or college education. What is more, the training that the English teachers did receive at the time was mainly not geared towards increasing their knowledge of teaching; rather, it was merely a compulsory component that the teachers had to undertake for successful completion of their last year of study and hence graduation.

### 6.3.1 Teacher Education

Teacher education, especially in the early stages of university, was one of the major concerns that the Libyan teachers raised in my research. They appeared to appreciate the importance of teacher education for their profession and its potential to support and enhance their teaching of the current English language curriculum. Although they believed in the importance of

teacher training as a supportive tool for successful teaching, the findings revealed that the teachers received little or no teacher training during the last year of their university or college education. This was unexpected because at university level, most graduates, especially English language graduates, are highly likely to join the teaching workforce as teaching often seems to be the only job available to them and also because there is a high demand for English language teachers. Thus, teacher training seemed to be very important for them.

Based on my experience as a university teacher, the EFL graduates of our university and other independent colleges, such as the city's college of teacher preparation, follow a four-year programme of English courses in literacy, English literature, linguistics, applied linguistics, and translation. Students generally take only one short course on EFL teaching methodology. They normally spend only two weeks of their last year of college working as novice teachers at intermediate and secondary schools, where they are required to teach one or two English classes per day. The increasing demand for school teachers, including English language teachers, in Libya and elsewhere (Reid and Kleinhenz, 2015) seems to be affecting the quality of training that novice teachers receive prior to joining the teaching workforce. As Cross (2003, p. 41) points out, employing untrained teachers to meet the increased demand or to 'expand access to schooling' is often at the expense of the quality of teacher preparation.

What is even more important than teacher preparation is the early acquisition of adequate teaching and learning skills prior to joining the profession. An arguably better way of achieving this is by constructing and implementing a learner-centred curriculum so that student teachers acquire the required knowledge and skills, and develop positive attitudes, values and beliefs about the new learning approaches (Reid and Kleinhenz, 2015). In our case, this can be achieved at a higher education level, where Libyan universities need to provide the right language education. For example, student teachers can perhaps acquire the required knowledge by learning explicit strategies to help them 'confront their own deep-seated beliefs and assumptions about learning, and learn about the experiences of other people' (ibid, p. 35). However, providing explicit strategies alone might not be enough to allow student teachers to challenge their educational beliefs. Indeed, student teachers must be provided with sufficient practical teaching practice prior to joining the teaching profession so that they can apply the strategies learned in real situations and evaluate their effectiveness. Since these practical sessions should be carried out in local public schools, universities must arrange and provide them with the cooperation of the schools. It might be argued that the more effective the student teachers find the teaching strategies, the more positive their beliefs in their usefulness

become. Unfortunately, the involvement of student teachers in practical teacher training is non-existent. This might be due to the internal educational policies of Libyan universities, or perhaps to the technical and financial constraints that the university in the research context is confronted with. Providing student teachers with practical teaching sessions might also be expensive, as the fees associated with these sessions are typically not covered by the government and would thus fall at the door of the university. The lack of teacher training at university seems to have had a profound impact on the teachers' implementation of the present English language curriculum. It is worth noting that another more important factor than teacher education itself is the nature of teaching and learning that the student teachers themselves experience at university level. Knowing how university English language teachers teach and student teachers learn can also help us better explain why English language teachers have not been able (since 2000) to implement the present English language curriculum successfully. This is crucial to know because what student teachers are being taught and how is most likely to shape their understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning. For example, if a traditional approach to language teaching is employed for preparing student teachers, it is more likely that their future practices will reflect a similar teaching approach. As this is the practice that appears to have been adopted at all levels of the study, this reinforces the student teachers' tendency to incorporate it into their own practice.

As my research findings suggest, the participant teachers seem to have had insufficient teacher education, either prior to or after their higher education. The only support that they received was the provision of teacher training in the form of practical teaching carried out at schools. However, that training was inadequate, i.e. just two weeks of practical teaching. Arguably, without adequate teacher training, it can be very difficult for teachers, especially in the Libyan context, to implement the English language teaching reform. Early language teacher education (at university level) can encourage prospective language teachers to teach and hence eliminate the fear of language teaching in the future. In addition, it can also clarify teachers' messy understanding of teaching and learning in general by challenging or altering their educational beliefs. Teacher educators are in the position to challenge or alter the beliefs and values that university students hold about teaching and learning. This can be achieved by incorporating teachers' voices and views as an important part of a dialogue between educators and teachers (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). In other words, prospective teachers should not be considered as passive recipients of knowledge delivered by their educators, but rather as collaborative and autonomous participants who actively reflect on their learning by

engaging with materials that must be designed to encourage active participation; that is, by experiencing more constructivist teaching (Crandall, 2000). This is crucial because teachers' beliefs tend to be very strong and they 'can be highly resistant to modification, particularly if they are not confronted in an explicit, meaningful way' (Sanger and Osguthorpe, 2011 p, 572).

Referring to the literature on the issues related to implementing English language innovations, it can be seen that such problems are not only restricted to the Libyan context, but are also common in almost all international educational systems (Dailey, 2010) (see Humphries and Burns, 2015, Rahman and Karim, 2015). For example, the lack of teacher education as a barrier to reform implementation is common in many milieus. Many research studies report insufficient teacher education programmes as one of the many factors that influence English language teaching (e.g, Al-Hazmi, 2003, Hudson et al., 2008, Peacock, 2009, Coskun and Daloglu, 2010, Kömür, 2010, Sulistiyo, 2015, Omede Andrew and Damian, 2016). For example, Sulistiyo (2015) reports that many EFL teachers in Indonesia raised concerns about the inadequacy of the teacher education that they received. The Indonesian teachers in the study stated that they did not gain much benefit from the courses that they had received and emphasised that more knowledge and general pedagogical skills were needed to improve how they balance theory and practice.

Three major models for constructing teacher education programmes were identified by Wallace (1991, cited in Crandall, 2000), which might also be relevant to the Libyan context. These three models are: 1) an apprenticeship model, whereby prospective teachers observe the teaching of experienced teachers; 2) a theory-to-practice model, which implies that prospective teachers learn the knowledge relating to teaching from experts in teaching and test what they have learned in actual contexts; and 3) a reflective model, which requires prospective teachers to reflect upon and evaluate selected teaching practices in the hope that teachers adapt these practices.

However, Wallace's models seem to be rather traditional and can be considered essentially knowledge-based, i.e. the translation of academic/theoretical knowledge into practice. Generally speaking, traditional teacher education programmes tend to ignore the values and beliefs that teachers have about teaching and learning (Crandall, 2000). Rather than considering them as implementers of predefined procedures, I also advocate the view that prospective teachers are to be considered as thinkers, problem solvers, and decision makers.

The fact is that teachers have their own beliefs about teaching, so what is needed is a space for teachers to reflect upon these beliefs in order to be able to create their own theories of language teaching and learning (ibid.).

Several major initiatives have been taken around the world to create new models of teacher education so as to address the problems associated with traditional teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2017), which mainly relate to it being fundamentally undemocratic. One dominant model in language teacher education is the Reflective Teaching model (Calderhead, 2006). The assumption underpinning this model is that pre-service teachers' professional competence is developed through reflections on their own practice. Thus, rather than being translators of theories into practice, pre-service teachers can reflect on these theories through the lenses of their own beliefs and judgments. In other words, it allows pre-service teachers to 'frame and reframe a problem as they work on it, testing out their interpretations and solutions, combining both reflection and action' (Calderhead, 1989 , p. 44).

As teacher education is almost non-existent in the Libyan context, there is nowhere for prospective teachers to learn about teaching. This, in turn, suggests that teacher educators have almost no responsibility for educating pre-service teachers. Therefore, although teacher educators are scarce nowadays, it is highly advisable that future teacher educators take into consideration the above conceptualisations in relation to teacher education. More importantly, teacher educators need to consider the values and beliefs that teachers bring from their experience as language learners. As Borg (2003, p. 88) asserts:

> Teachers' prior language learning experiences establish cognitions about learning and language learning which form the basis of their initial conceptualisations of L2 teaching during teacher education, and which may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives.

Teachers' prior language learning experiences can thus work as a barrier to achieving the goals of teacher education programmes. For example, some teachers might think that English grammar rules are best understood if they are taught explicitly/traditionally, recalling their experiences as young school learners using that approach. By taking into consideration teachers' prior language learning experiences, as well as their beliefs developed from such learning experiences, teacher education initiatives can be made much more effective. As Kumaravadivelu (2001, p. 552) argues, 'When teacher educators use the teachers' values, beliefs, and knowledge as integral parts of the learning process, then the entire process of

teacher education becomes reflective and rewarding.' Although this would seem to be a difficult task for Libya's teacher educators, as this would represent an almost new experience for them as well as the trainee teachers, it could be successful if teacher education programmes were designed in such a way as to take into account the above-mentioned conceptualisations.

But before accounting for such conceptualisations, it is very important to understand how English language teaching and learning occur at higher education (university) in Libya, since it seems that what and how the students learn, subsequently shapes their future teaching practice. As a university English language teacher, I am familiar with how we teach and how our students learn. Teaching and learning are very much teacher-centred and our students learn passively. At my university, and most likely at other universities and institutions, too, the English language curriculum is, by and large, knowledge-based. In my working environment, university English language teachers (similar to school English language teachers today) fill their students with that ready-to-consume knowledge. Our students play no role in controlling and reflecting on that knowledge. They merely recycle the knowledge passed down to them and reproduce it in the exams they aim to pass. Changing our university curriculum would seem to be an impossible endeavour. However, we must remember that it is we, as individual teachers, who make the university and it is we who can change it. The university curriculum is created by selecting certain materials that are thought to be useful for our students. As a teacher at that university, it is hard to make the claim that the materials we choose for each subject's curriculum are learner-based. Quite the opposite;, they are knowledge-based materials. In addition, we construct the final examinations. In other words, it is we who have the power to design the examinations in such a way as to include (if we so wish) the aspects required for testing learners' communicative competence. Yet, these examinations are still traditional in content. The reason for this is that university's English language teachers seem to be unaware of their important role in preparing capable school teachers to cope with the innovations in English language education. Hence, I would argue very strongly that a change in university teachers' educational understanding is essential. They must be aware that it is they who can make English language teaching and learning in schools successful. In this regard, revisiting Libya's university English language curriculum might also be necessary in order to meet the demands of contemporary school English language education.

Higher education curricula should be changed to meet the needs of student teachers' future careers. One possible approach that might be employed to improve Libyan students' learning experiences at university is the one developed by McRae et al. (2017). In Australia, McRae and colleagues (2017) employed certain methods to design new programmes for implementing a new set of learning and teaching principles to meet the needs of students. Although their methods concerned business and technology education, these methods can also be applied to Libya's English language education as they primarily aim to improve students' independent learning. The Libyan university curriculum could be redesigned to integrate the following principles explained in the work of McRae et al. (2017, pp. 8-13):

- Active learning with small class sizes: increased student activity and less teacher-talk time. Students' interactive engagement is encouraged to help students to apply the theory and create shared understanding.
- Enhanced technology integration into learning: employing technology in learning, e.g. with mobile learning technologies. This will help students to engage individually or in groups in online extended activities. Teachers will also be able to assess their students' understanding and track their learning progress.
- Authentic learning: students need to clearly see the relevance of what they study to what they experience in real life so as to be able to engage with the materials at a deeper level. In other words, they need to be provided with situations they would likely experience in their future careers.
- Personalised learning: taking into account that every student is different in terms of learning and they may need further support and scaffolding. More self-study opportunities are provided so students can revise at home.

According to McRae et al. (2017), the curriculum transformation that was undertaken using the methods outlined above was highly successful in improving the teaching practices of teaching staff, which in turn helped to produce non-traditional students. As their approach aimed to prepare student teachers in higher education for better future performance, it could also be employed in our higher education context. If careful English language curriculum transformation in Libya's higher education were carried out following the methods outlined by McRae et al. (2017) , the potential for positive results in terms of the improvements in students' independent learning would no doubt be good. Until this happens, prospective school English language teachers will most likely continue to be influenced by their prior traditional learning experiences.

### 6.3.2 Professional Development

Another supportive tool identified by CHAT is professional development. This section will provide an in-depth discussion of the participants' experiences of the support they received in relation to professional development. The findings of my research suggest that the teachers received neither sufficient in-service nor continuing professional development courses in general. The teachers' primary concern was about the number and quality of the courses that they received in relation to implementing the present English language curriculum. The issue of the length of the professional development courses, time and venues of the courses, and the poor conditions of the halls where the courses took place are key issues that appear to have had a significant impact on the participant teachers' curriculum implementation. The teachers' responses to the interview questions reflect such issues. For example, Jalal, like many of the other participants, considered the professional development that he had received to be insufficient. In addition to this, quality issues were also raised, with Osama and Jalal raising concerns about the course educators themselves. They criticised them for being unaware of the importance of the practical side of the courses, e.g. the lack of practical teaching provided, or, as Jalal called it, 'mock teaching', which they said was neglected.

In relation to organisational issues, Anwar stressed that the scheduling of the course that he received did not allow him to attend. Indeed, afternoon courses are unsuitable for English language teachers who finish their school classes late in the day, as was the case for Anwar, who finished his language classes only an hour and a half before the training course started. This can leave the participating teachers burdened with an unbearably heavy workload. The teacher participants generally taught around twelve hours a week (three English classes for each secondary school) and mostly finished their teaching at one o'clock or later. Since the teachers worked full time, it might be difficult for them to access training courses that are unwisely timed. Arguably, their heavy workloads are perhaps the biggest barriers that Libyan teachers face, as they may feel they are too busy to attend a course and unable to find time to reflect on using a new teaching method (See Guskey, 2002, Abuhmaid, 2011, Sellen, 2016, Sandilos et al., 2018). This issue might be linked to the notion of professionalism in teaching. Teacher professionalism today contrasts with how it was in the past, when it was considered externally regulated and controlled and hence lacking in autonomy (Demirkasımoğlu, 2010). Today, teachers are portrayed as being de-professionalised and crumbling under multiple pressures of intensified work demands (ibid., p. 2050). This new conceptualisation of teacher

professionalism is useful for understanding the current situation in the Libyan context. Although teacher professionalism is understood differently today, there are still, as stated above, intensive work demands made of Libyan teachers (e.g. planning and preparing lessons, marking students' homework, creating and grading weekly quizzes, and supervising mid-term and final examinations), which in turn seem to have prompted many Libyan teachers to undertake courses to enhance their teaching professionalism.

Moreover, my research findings suggest that the planning and organisation of professional development courses for English language teachers (which were provided by language inspectors who were themselves trained by British ELT specialists (Orafi, 2008)) in the research context were inappropriate not only in terms of course timing but also in terms of where these courses took place. It is widely recognised that professional development courses are likely to be successful if they are administered within the teaching context (schools). However, this does not seem to be the case in Libya. While some participants were concerned about the quality of the training courses that they attended, Rafeeq explicitly complained about the location of the course he attended, which was outside of his school and where essential preparations for effective professional development had not been made, including the provision of suitable resources, time and space. It is arguable that carrying out professional development courses outside of teaching contexts may not achieve the objectives of matching the needs and culture of 'a particular group of professionals … or having some direct impact on practice' (Craft, 2002 p, 20). What needs to be highlighted here is not only that there was no solid basis for effective training courses in the research context, but also that these courses were not ongoing. My research findings suggest that the participant teachers had received only one professional development course since 2000. This is important because it implies that English language teachers in the research context had been teaching for more than 18 years with almost no professional support in place to help them adapt to and implement the new language curriculum. It is essential for the effective implementation of curricular reform to have well-trained and continuously developed teachers. Arguably, what makes good teachers is engaging them in effective and continuous professional development since research suggests that professional development is most effective when it is continuous and ongoing (Duffy and Hoffman, 1999, Darling-Hammond, 2017). As educational changes are ongoing, teaching practices also need to alter accordingly to keep up with these changes.

Research suggests that short training courses designed specifically for the implementation of curricular reform are inadequate (Little, 1993, Harvey, 1999). This was the case in the Libyan context. In any case, even if we were to accept this brevity, it could be suggested that after completing the (short) training courses, trainee teachers should be monitored while they try to put what they have learned into action. Guskey and Yoon (2009, p. 497) assert that 'educators at all levels need just-in-time, job-embedded assistance as they struggle to adapt new curricula and new instructional practices to their unique classroom contexts'. Nabhani and Bahous (2010) add that what is necessary is a lengthy and mandatory professional development programme. They also suggest that, more importantly, trainees must have mentors whose essential role is to help trainees adopt what they have learned in their practices. This suggests that merely introducing teachers to new and significantly different materials and teaching techniques as part of a one-week training course, as was the case for the Libyan teachers in the research context, is insufficient to enable them to implement the new English language curriculum effectively. As Ponte (2005, p. 274) stresses, 'Teachers cannot change their practice in a meaningful way simply by being told to do so.' Hence, we need to understand here that 'with no development in their career there is no improvement in the whole' (Muñoz and Bermello, 2017, p. 123).

The lack of adequate continuous professional development is common in different contexts around the world. Other research studies have raised similar concerns about the quantity and quality of training that teachers receive in relation to CLT (e.g, Zheng, 2012, Kalanzadeh et al., 2013b, Zein, 2015, Althobaiti, 2017, Muñoz and Bermello, 2017). In Ecuador, for example, Muñoz and Bermello (2017) investigated the quality of the professional development that teachers received in relation to English language teaching. Their findings suggest that the professional development programmes lack the professional information necessary to encourage changes in pedagogical practices and do not offer practical support or motivation.

In short, professional development for the Libyan teachers in the study was scarce, with some receiving none whatsoever. This is mainly due to the absence of a mandatory professional development policy. It must be emphasised here that ignoring the important requirements for successful professional development programmes will more likely result in their failure. Such failure could prevent teachers from participating in future courses because they might develop negative views from their previous experiences regarding the duration, relevance, and usefulness of the courses. Unfortunately, the professional development programmes for

the teachers in the research context are not of a high quality and offer insufficient support to teachers. In addition, these programmes are unable to provide ongoing support for teachers as they attempt to implement new English language curricula with entirely new pedagogies. Merely providing teachers with a one-off professional development course may not bring about the intended objectives (Borg, 2015a). Moreover, the careless planning and organisation of professional development courses for teachers might create barriers to them attending these courses, as we have learned from the case of Libya's English language teachers.

#### 6.3.2.1 Teacher's Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Sessions Provided to Introduce the Curriculum

Not to be confused with the issues related to ongoing professional development examined above, this section discusses the issues surrounding the introduction of the present curriculum, i.e., how teachers were informed of and introduced to the new curriculum at the time.

My research findings suggest that there were few or no procedures (supportive tools, in CHAT terms) to introduce the present English language curriculum. The participant teachers criticised the quantity and quality of the information that they received about the curriculum. For example, Anwar reported receiving no introductory course to familiarise him with the curriculum, its underlying philosophy of teaching and learning, and so on. While Majeed did in fact receive some training, he considered the programme that he received to be insufficient. On top of this, he and other teachers who attended were asked to pass on what they had learned from the programme to their colleagues in their own schools. This demonstrates that, in some cases, the cascade model was employed to introduce the present curriculum. Despite the great deal of criticism that this model has received, the education authorities in Libya seem to have looked only at its advantages. They appear to view it as a cost-effective, economical, and perhaps successful approach to providing targeted teachers with the information they need about the curriculum.

The cascade model is often the preferred way to introduce educational reforms (MacNeil, 2004, Ono and Ferreira, 2010, Lange, 2014). The cascade model consists of selecting a group of teachers to be trained as multipliers. Then, they are asked to pass on what they have learned to their colleagues (Leu, 2004, Mulkeen, 2009). The cascade model is mostly used in countries with fewer resources to help teachers match their classroom practices with those

intended by the educational reform (Kennedy, 2005). However, the cascade model seems to be problematic in that, in many cases, it does not meet teachers' expectations in terms of quality and quantity. This can result in teachers developing misconceptions about the aims and principles of the curricular reform in general and, in turn, they may not be able to put the desired teaching approaches into practice.

As noted earlier, educators employing the cascade model train the first generation of teachers in a specific topic or aspect of teaching. Once the trainees have become proficient, these teachers pass on the knowledge to the second generation of teachers (Day, 1999, Griffin 1999, cited in Mokhele, 2014, Kennedy, 2005). Thus, an immediate benefit of the cascade model is the ability to reach many teachers in a short time, using fewer resources, which makes it cost-effective for countries undertaking educational reforms (Hardman, 2011, Ono and Ferreira, 2010, Dichaba and Mokhele, 2012).

The principles and objectives of the cascade model itself seem to be useful in terms of spreading information about educational change. In practical terms, however, it seems to fail to achieve its objectives. By and large, educators employing the cascade model to introduce new curricula tend to ignore the values and beliefs teachers may have about such curricula. This is only one criticism of many and might suggest that although it appears to be popular among developing countries, the cascade model is not without its challenges (Bett, 2016).

Among the other disadvantages of the cascade model is its inability to meet teachers' needs by providing subject knowledge matter and pedagogical expertise, or an understanding of the curriculum and its objectives (Wanzare and Ward, 2000, Nyarigoti, 2013). Moreover, cascade model programmes are most often undertaken outside schools. While school contexts can vary, cascade-based programmes tend to ignore such variations, thus, violating the principle that, to be effective, professional development programmes should be carried out in the schools where teachers are based (Kennedy, 2005, Hunzicker, 2011). Consequently, linking the training that teachers have received to their own context tends to fail and, on many occasions, teachers experience challenges in applying the innovation in the classroom (Kennedy, 2005, Hardman et al., 2011, Hunzicker, 2011).

Many research studies report that the cascade model fails to provide effective teacher training that helps teachers adopt predefined teaching practices (e.g, McDevitt, 1998, Barrett, 2010, Suzuki, 2011, Dichaba and Mokhele, 2012, King, 2018). For example, Dichaba and Mokhele (2012) investigated the effectiveness of the cascade model in training teachers to bring about

changes in teaching practices to adapt to the proposed educational reforms in South Africa. They found that teachers found it difficult to pass on the knowledge they received in the training to their fellow colleagues. The researchers concluded that the concerns that their research participants expressed were due to the dilution of the information when it was passed onto the next generation. This eventually led to the failure of the model to bring about the intended changes in teachers' pedagogical practices, which suggests that the model needs amending immediately. Unless there is careful planning and serious adjustments are made to the model, such preparation programmes will continue to fail. In relation to this research study, the cascade model used to introduce the new curriculum was not successful in enabling teachers to understand the curriculum or in addressing the teachers' conceptions about teaching and learning resulting from the failure of the model.

However, the cascade model could potentially be beneficial if the factors that might hinder its success are addressed. Hayes (2000, p. 138) outlines five criteria that are important for successful cascade training:

1) the method of conducting the training must be experiential and reflective rather than transmissive;

2) the training must be open to reinterpretation; rigid adherence to prescribed ways of working should not be expected;

3) expertise must be diffused through the system as widely as possible, not concentrated at the top;

4) a cross-section of stakeholders must be involved in the preparation of training materials;

5) decentralisation of responsibilities within the cascade structure is desirable.

Although Hayes's criteria suggest immediate remedies for the cascade model's failure in some developing countries, they might not prove to be so successful in others. For example, sometimes, the aim of the cascade training (as in the Libyan context) is to quickly reach as many teachers as possible while minimising costs. However, this may not allow enough time for teachers to reflect on the content of the training they receive.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that a rethinking of the cascade approach to curriculum presentation employed in Libya is needed. The fact that many teachers joining the teaching profession lack adequate pedagogical experience (Hardman et al., 2012, Pryor et al.,

2012) has led to calls for teaching development programmes to play a greater role in preparing these teachers. However, employing the cascade model in teaching development programmes may not sufficiently address the anticipated needs of the participating teachers. For example, teachers may not implement what is being offered when they are forced to attend a cascade-based training programme aimed at introducing a new curriculum if this training does not provide teachers with adequate practical training, improve their pedagogical expertise, or build their subject knowledge capacity.

In relation to CHAT, the lack of supportive tools discussed above (teachers' higher education, professional development, and perceptions of the sessions provided to introduce the curriculum) has arguably impacted the quality of teachers' implementation of the present English curriculum. Thus, teachers' higher education and professional development represent the element of CHAT (the "tool" or supportive tools) without which teachers' commitment to implementing the curriculum would be significantly affected.

### 6.3.3 Physical Constraints

In the research context, the classroom conditions seem to have contributed to inhibiting the participant teachers' efforts to implement the present English language curriculum. What Schweisfurth (2011, p. 427) says about the realities of classrooms in developing countries also applies to what was observed in the Libyan schools: 'Classroom realities in developing country contexts evidently create challenges for LCE [learner-centred education]. The ideal-typical LCE classroom as envisaged in the doctrine of progressivists based in the rich minority world is far from the lived experience of most teachers and learners' in other (developing) countries. In the Libyan context, the poor physical classroom conditions, with their traditional desks and broken doors and windows, are a major source of concern for English language teachers. Moreover, all of the participant teachers complained about the lack of sufficient resources in their schools, such as CD players, LCD screens, or internet access for obtaining further instructional materials. The terrible state of Libyan schools seems to complicate the teachers' implementation of the present English language curriculum. For example, while Jalal was trying to carry out a group work activity, he had to cope with having no suitable tables. It was also observed that communicative activities relating to listening, speaking, and writing were almost always skipped. In the follow-up interviews, when the teachers were asked about the reasons that led them to neglect such activities, they cited the shortage in teaching facilities that made it difficult for them to conduct

communicative activities. Some of these activities were conducted solely by the teacher, particularly the speaking tasks. For the listening tasks, the participants needed dedicated listening labs, which were not available to them. The lack of such labs was considered a major barrier. For example, Rafeeq made it clear that listening activities cannot be effective unless a proper infrastructure is in place. This underlines the important role of teaching and learning facilities because new language teaching and learning techniques imply new and up-to-date teaching and learning aids (Fullan, 2007). Thus, given the absence of teaching aids and suitable classroom furniture, implementing CLT is very challenging for the teachers and might prompt some to revert to more traditional practices. It might also be argued that without proper infrastructure to support teaching and learning, it can be very difficult for teachers to put into practice what is regarded to be educational innovation (Schweisfurth, 2015).

### 6.3.4 Organisational Constraints

Organisational constraints also seem to have a significant impact on the implementation of CLT. Amongst those that were reported by the participants are: short class times, large class sizes, and the traditional examination system. Almost all of the teachers reported encountering problems with the length of classes (45 minutes), which they described as insufficient for CLT activities. This could explain why most teachers skipped the communicative activities such as speaking and pair or group work tasks. Indeed, the teachers' responses in the follow-up interview confirm this. For example, when Yousif was asked why he did not carry out a listening activity, he explained that even if there were a listening lab (the lack of listening labs was discussed earlier), the time allocated to the class (40-45 minutes) is very short for carrying out such an activity and would leave little or no time for others.

Communicative language teaching is recognised to be a time-consuming teaching approach (Li, 1998). Time plays a crucial role here as almost all communicative learning activities require careful planning and evaluation. In CLT, teachers are expected to develop materials that support learners' communicative competence (Richards, 2005). Clearly, this demands a considerable amount of time, not only for teachers to prepare the necessary materials for the CLT activities, but also for students (prior to their active engagement and reflection) to become familiar with these activities. Therefore, it is important to consider giving teachers appropriate time to reflect on and employ CLT, whether for communicative tasks or even for

tasks that do not involve students in communicative activities, as all materials require careful planning.

It is also important to note that what might have led the teachers to consider the class time to be insufficient might be the large number of students in each class. Most participants raised concerns about the large class sizes. In the research context, the number of students per class ranged between 30 and 40 students. As Omar recommended, for communicative activities to succeed, the number of students must be reduced. In fact, many teachers attributed the neglecting of communicative activities to this issue. For example, Osama's ability to conduct communicative tasks was greatly affected by the large number of students (40) that he had in his class.

One of the main characteristics of CLT is that it enforces the importance of teachers' verbal interaction with individual students (Schweisfurth, 2015). This is thought to support students' active learning (Alexander, 2008, Westbrook, 2013). Schweisfurth (2015, p. 264) claims that '[h]igh quality classroom talk (not just verbal interaction of any kind) develops both individual agency and engagement and provides teachers with constant feedback on individual and group progress'. This implies that in language classrooms, CLT secures students' right to have their own opinions so that they can negotiate and participate actively. However, in large classroom sizes, "dialogic teaching" (ibid., p. 264), i.e. the teacher's verbal interaction with students, can be challenged by the fact that there is no appropriate time for teachers to interact with every individual student. Clearly, time and class size are key players in the success or the failure of CLT pedagogy. Hence, to promote CLT and secure students' rights to express their opinions for a good learning experience, teachers and students must be given enough time to allow for the best teaching and learning experience. However, teachers' beliefs about other constraints to CLT must also be addressed.

Another key issue relating to the implementation of CLT is the traditional local and national examination system that does not appear to test students' communicative competence. These assessments test students' grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension, with no attention given to assessment processes that are meaningful to students and by which students' learning can be improved. In addition, high-stakes entrance examinations seem to have influenced teachers' classroom practices. Libyan teachers in the city consider the examination system to be a barrier that complicates their adherence to the objectives of the current English language curriculum. Consequently, teachers in the research context teach what will be tested

in the exam and ignore other contents that will not be covered. For example, Belgasem refused to engage his students in communicative tasks because he believed that students' communicative competence would not be assessed in the mid-term or the final exam.

It is apparent that examinations, whether school or university entrance examinations, seem to have a great impact on teachers' willingness to change their classroom practices. Lamie (2004, p. 127) points out that 'if the tests are perceived by the teachers to have significant effects on their students' lives, then they can see it as part of their duty to make sure that their pupils have the best possible chance they can to succeed'. This closely echoes the participating teachers' views about the powerful effect that the local and national examinations have on their classroom practice.

These findings suggest that there is a serious need to carry out certain reforms to the educational system in Libya. This would include a change in the current examination system. To date, English language examinations in Libya only test students' linguistic competence. Skills such as listening, writing, and speaking skills are overlooked. Nishino (2008) reports that teachers believe that changing classroom conditions, e.g. by changing from grammar-oriented examinations, can help them implement CLT. But this raises a question: does this imply that changing the examination system will lead to the successful implementation of CLT?

Changing the examination system alone might not bring about an improvement in promoting CLT among teachers. Gorsuch (2000) argues that without changing school and classroom conditions, teachers may not be able to employ CLT effectively, even if the examination system is changed. She also points out that 'the influence of students' expectations on teachers' instruction is potentially powerful. Teachers who conduct classroom activities that run counter to students' expectations risk non-cooperation from the students' (p. 685). She contends that high school students' major concern is to pass university entrance exams in English courses, and, as a result, they consider communicative activities irrelevant. This implies that it might be difficult for teachers to effectively employ CLT without their students' cooperation. This highlights the need to consider students' attitudes towards learner-centred education. It might be argued here that it is not only teachers that play a key part in moving forward learner-centred education, but that students also play a crucial role in supporting their teachers to implement learner-based educational reforms.

What this research study identified in relation to the historical constraints to CLT implementation discussed above is important. As Libya is an oil-rich country (Ayub et al., 2016), it appears that the ineffective implementation of CLT in Libya is not due to the lack of resources, such as laboratories, supportive classrooms layouts, and access to the internet for more online resources that CLT or progressive education in general requires to succeed (Luz, 2015), but, rather, it is due to English language teachers being isolated. This isolation of English language teachers might explain the existence of these constraints for over 18 years and represents an important new finding. Before elaborating further on the idea of teachers' isolation, it is important to recall the finding reported in the previous chapter. Briefly, the curriculum reform in Libya was only concerned with a holistic reform of the old English curriculum, with no intention to reform other curricular areas. Other curricular areas remained untouched, especially Arabic language teaching and teachers of these subjects. Consequently, this has led English teachers to feel isolated, as they are the only ones who have been required to change their teaching and learning approaches. As Adey et al. (2004, p. 24) note, 'an individual teacher finds it virtually impossible to maintain a radically new form of teaching while colleagues around them in the same school remain untouched by the innovation'. This implies that not only do teachers find it almost impossible to implement innovations, but it is also almost impossible for their views regarding implementation challenges to be heard due to the fact that they are the only agents required to make the change.

Although my research findings suggest that most of the participating teachers are advocates of learner-centred English language education and that they intended to change their traditional teaching approaches, it can be argued that the teachers' voices calling for the means to make the change possible are not being heard, which leads to further negative consequences. As an example, the teachers' isolation means that they are less able to influence people in power and have them listen to their voices and their needs. Until teachers' voices are heard, English language teachers will continue to be considered a minority complaining about their teaching, while other colleagues in the same school do not. One might suggest that if reforms based on a progressive view of education were made to other school curricula, it may help all teachers, including English language teachers, to unite their voices and become stronger in expressing their educational needs. But, does this mean that we need to wait until this happens? To eliminate such concerns in relation to curricular reform, a radically different approach is required which may only be specific to English

language education, and not to other subject disciplines. If the curricular reform affected other subject areas, the number of the teachers concerned would be larger, which would consequently enable them to support each other. Instead, Libya's English teachers are isolated and find the new approach a great deal harder to implement due to these various extraneous factors.

The organisational constraints to implementing communicative activities, such as large class sizes, lack of time for undertaking such activities, and traditional examinations, have also been reported by many other research studies as barriers to CLT implementation (Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999, Chang and Goswami, 2011, Humphries and Burns, 2015, Li, 1998, Al-Khwaiter, 2001, Ozsevik, 2010, Coskun, 2011, Ansarey, 2012, Kalanzadeh et al., 2013b, Vongxay, 2013, Agrawal, 2004, Kavanagh, 2012, Jafari et al., 2015, Lee, 2016, Papajani, 2015, Zhu and Shu, 2017). For example, Chang and Goswami (2011) identified that many Taiwanese teachers felt challenged by the lack of appropriate time available to complete communicative tasks. In higher education, Humphries and Burns (2015) found that among the barriers that teachers encountered was the lack of time to use the textbooks in the way they were intended. Vongxay (2013) reports large class sizes as one factor hindering teachers' efforts to carry out communicative tasks. Papajani (2015) found that due to the incongruity between the exam criteria and the objectives of the English language curriculum in Albania, teachers tended to focus on reading and grammar at the expense of other language skills aimed at developing students' communicative competence.

The physical tools noted earlier are consistent with the element of CHAT - the "tool", which suggest that human activity is mediated by the tools available to make that activity (Engeström, 2001, Koszalka and Wu, 2004). This means that the "object" of that activity, i.e. CLT implementation, is less likely to be achieved if the physical tools are scarce.

To conclude, the complexity of the organisational factors discussed in this section seem to have contributed to the failure to bring about the effective implementation of the present English language curriculum. As teachers have been required to use CLT in the classroom, the time limitations, the poor classroom infrastructure, the large class sizes, and the current examination system all seriously inhibited the uptake and implementation of the curricular reform.

### 6.3.5 Mental Tools: Beliefs About Teaching and Learning

Another important form of mediation suggested by CHAT is the effect of mental tools (beliefs) on the Libyan teachers' activity (communicative teaching). More precisely, and as seen in many cases above, their beliefs about the roles that they and their students should play in the classroom influenced their commitment to achieve the goal and hence reach the outcome articulated by the English language curriculum developers. Typically, such beliefs can be related to social power. That is to say, beliefs about the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom seem to have been influenced by how their society sees them within an educational system. Generally speaking, teachers are seen by their society, particularly by parents, as knowledge holders and classroom managers who transfer their knowledge to children (Wang, 2002).

Moreover, the participant teachers' beliefs about their students' learning abilities also affected their efforts to achieve the objectives of the present English language curriculum. In addition to the other mediating factor, discussed above, with which the participating teachers had to struggle, many of them believed that most of their students lacked the essential requirements for language learning. They believed that most of their learners did not know much about simple sentence construction, correct word pronunciation, or word meanings. As Libyan teachers and students are required to adopt new classroom roles, many of these roles, such as the requirement to become active learners in the learning process, seem to be challenging for students to adopt. This might be due to the fact that English language education in Libya is only provided at secondary school level, which results in young learners progressing from primary to secondary school with no prior language education. Consequently, Libyan students find it challenging to adopt the new role of independent leaners. The following sections will provide an in-depth discussion of my participant teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and the influence of these views on their classroom practice. This will include a detailed discussion of the teachers' beliefs about teacher and student classroom roles, their beliefs about their students' learning abilities, and their beliefs about Libyan culture.

#### 6.3.5.1 Teachers' Beliefs About Their Role in the Classroom

The participant teachers in my research were affected by the beliefs (or the mental tool, in CHAT terms) they hold about their role in the language classroom. These beliefs are

inconsistent with the roles proposed by the revised English language curriculum designers. The type of classroom activities proposed in the present English language curriculum in Libya implies new roles for teachers, who have to become facilitators and monitors. Generally, teachers in CLT classrooms are described as guides, facilitators and organisers of learning resources. They are expected to promote collaborative learning by engaging their students in various communicative activities (Richards and Rodgers, 2014, Melrose, 2015, Hall, 2017).

In each lesson or activity, students should be encouraged to learn actively, and it is expected that they will direct their own learning. In contrast, some of the Libyan teachers believed that their primary role was to provide their students with important language information that would enhance their linguistic competence. Such traditional views about teachers' classroom roles seem to be incongruent with the roles presented earlier. Their existing beliefs shaped their understanding of how teaching and learning should be. Moreover, even those who expressed progressive views of education were observed to act as directors rather than facilitators. For example, Omar used certain traditional techniques, such as Arabic translation of grammatical rules, referring to similar grammatical rules in Arabic to illustrate the English grammatical structures. It was apparent that these teachers' views corresponded closely with the traditional or transmissive approach to language teaching. It is to be expected that Libyan teachers might develop such an educational belief about their role in the classroom, especially if we take into consideration the fact that they had to teach the former teacher-based English language curriculum for almost 12 years. This appeared to be a hindering factor that led, along with other factors, to the unsuccessful implementation of the English language curriculum reform.

My research findings suggest three different possible sources to explain teachers' beliefs about their role: 1) the personal context, which concerns their personal teaching histories, including their own experiences as learners; 2) the school and community context in which the teachers work; and 3) the theoretical changes taking place in language education and language pedagogy. Given the fact that English language teachers in Libya are required to adopt and implement a learner-centred approach, the teachers' beliefs about their roles could be considered positive because many of the participant teachers considered that being facilitators was central to their work. For example, Omar, a male research participant, believed that the present English language curriculum was a very good shift from traditional

teaching and learning to a more learner-centred English language education, where his role in the class was minimal.

In practical terms, however, the teachers' classroom practice was observed to be inconsistent with their stated views. According to the observational data, my research findings suggest that the participants seemed to act most often as knowledge transmitters in their EFL classes. The teachers seemed to be unable to adopt and implement the changed pedagogy. For example, Majeed, who stated in the interview that he was in favour of a learner-centred ideology, acted like an orchestra conductor. Although he tried to carry out communicative activities with his students, he always completely controlled his students' classroom activities. His students' roles in the class were very minimal. They were almost entirely restricted to doing what the teacher required them to do, such as completing exercises in their course books or answering his direct questions. There was almost no interaction among students. Most classroom interactions were between the teacher and his students. They had no authority or responsibility for their own learning. The teacher did almost all of the talking, read all of the instructions in the course book, wrote what he thought was important on the whiteboard, used Arabic as the mean of instruction, gave translations in Arabic, and explained what the students should do. He did not allow or give any opportunity for the students to reflect, negotiate their understanding, or produce complete sentences in English. That is to say, the students did not in fact experience the communicative materials that had been designed specifically for them. As a result, they lacked real opportunities to engage in communicative activities that would have enabled them to practise the foreign language in class. However, it was also observed that the students seemed to be reluctant to participate in such activities. Most of the students did not even like to answer direct questions from their teachers. Even those who answered the teacher's direct questions seemed to be lacking in confidence, shy and hesitant. Their English proficiency still needed further improvement. The teacher may have known this already, and his observed behaviour could therefore be explained by what he believed about his students' English language proficiency.

Overall, the findings reported above are consistent with Kelly's personal construct theory (1955), which proposes that teachers translate intended changes, such as curricula reform, into action based on how they interpret their role in their classrooms. Teachers' beliefs about their roles can, thus, have a significant impact on lesson plans, classroom instruction, and interactions with students (Ahonen et al., 2014), and hence on overall curriculum implementation.

However, this does not seem to be the only factor. As my research findings suggest, teachers become teachers after they have completed their university or college education. As discussed earlier, the university and college in the research context are the primary (if not the only) source of knowledge about teaching for student teachers. What they are taught and how they learn seem to have instilled in them beliefs about teaching and learning. In other words, the participants might have developed views about the roles of teachers and learners as a result of what they were taught at university and how language was taught to them. The key message to be conveyed here is that teachers' preconceptions about their roles in the classroom support or hinder the implementation of curricular reform. As the current teaching situation seems to conflict with the present curriculum with regard to its implementation, it is very important to challenge the beliefs that Libyan teachers hold about their classroom role. Challenging and altering these beliefs in the Libyan context might be possible, especially if we, as university language teachers, work together to develop our university curriculum while we still have the power to do so, placing great emphasis on constructivist approaches to language teaching and learning so that our student teachers have the opportunity to experience, evaluate, and reflect on such approaches in the hope that this whole experience is reflected in their future teaching practices.

#### 6.3.5.2 Teachers' Beliefs About Their Students' Role

The second influential belief (or mediating artefact, as CHAT suggests) that Libyan teachers hold about teaching and learning is their belief about the students' role in the classroom. As the present English language curriculum is communicative-based, it brings a new role for Libyan students to take on while they are learning. In a learner-centred approach, the role of the student is as an 'interactor and negotiator who is capable of giving as well as taking' (Melrose, 2015, p. 164), and is expected to be 'an active interpreter of input and to be willing to tolerate uncertainty along the path of learning' (Richards and Rodgers , 2014, p. 127).

Libyan English language learners today are expected to participate in communicative classroom activities that involve cooperative work, rather than follow a traditional approach to English language learning. Learners are required to listen to their peers and join in with group work or pair work activities, rather than relying on their teachers for a model. They are expected to be responsible for their own learning. In a communicative class, grammar rules are not explained directly to students but are instead learned deductively (Cook, 2016). Learners are expected to interact primarily with each other, rather than with their teacher, and

grammatical error corrections may be infrequent (Hall, 2017). This approach stressed in communicative-based English language curriculum may be unfamiliar to students. Likewise, teachers may be unfamiliar with the new roles that their students have to play and may, as a result, bring with them their traditional views about their students' roles into the classroom (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). In fact, the participant teachers did indeed share such traditional views.

The Libyan English language teachers' beliefs about their students' roles in the classroom reflect the traditional views of language learning. Some of the participants' responses suggest that their students' role in the class was to sit quietly and consume the knowledge handed down to them by their teachers. Even those teachers who claimed that their learners should learn actively (indicating their support for a learner-oriented approach to language learning) were observed doing little to encourage their students' active learning. This takes us back to the above discussion regarding the ways in which teachers are affected by their beliefs about their role in the classroom.

Teachers' beliefs about their students' roles in the Libyan context also seem to hinder the implementation of the current English language curriculum. In fact, it is not only the teachers who hold these beliefs; the students also appear to prefer to learn in a traditional way. For example, Rafeeq reported that his students expect him to control their learning. The students seemed to be happy with their roles as passive recipients of knowledge, sitting quietly and answering questions when they were asked to do so. This was evidenced when Osama constantly told his students to be quiet during the lessons. It is apparent from the classroom observation that the students had no chance to discover anything for themselves. They also engaged in almost no pair work activities, especially for speaking practice, during the observed classes of Rafeeq and many other of the teachers. The teachers required their students to answer questions (originally intended for pair work activities) on their own and not get help or work out the answers collaboratively with their peers. Such beliefs about students' traditional roles might be associated with the effect of culture, e.g. how their community sees them as learners (Ishihara and Cohen, 2014, Richards and Rodgers, 2014), which has developed over time. In the eastern part of Libya, and probably in the western part too, parents teach their children the manners that teachers will expect from them. Parents tend to ask their children to respect their teachers and not to argue with them or ask questions. It is worth noting here that such pre-conceptualisations formed in early childhood (Vygotsky, 1978) seem to leave a lasting impact on how young learners behave in class. Based on

research studies, it can be argued that such formed beliefs developed from cultural powers are incongruent with the theoretical assumptions underpinning contemporary language learning, as in the case of CLT, where students are encouraged to engage in active and autonomous learning and to discover, negotiate and reflect on their learning (Tanaka, 2009, Adi, 2012, Marcellino, 2015).

Referring to the literature, teachers' beliefs about their role and their students' role in the classroom are also reported as a barrier to reform implementation. Researchers have begun to acknowledge the powerful influence of teachers' educational beliefs on the curriculum implementation process. Research findings available in this field suggest that, in general, teachers do not implement curricular reform as intended by curriculum designers (e.g, Penner, 1995, Dailey, 2010, Ozsevik, 2010, Ahmed and Sarker, 2013, Ahonen et al., 2014, Onurkan Aliusta and Özer, 2017). For example, when Onurkan Aliusta and Özer (2017) investigated high school teachers' practices in Northern Cyprus with regard to student-centred learning (SCL), they found that teachers' actual practices did not reflect the principles and objectives of SCL. Their data revealed that teachers still considered themselves as class managers, classroom authorities and knowledge experts, while their students had to accommodate the knowledge imparted to them by their teachers. This resulted in less acceptance of SCL and failure to implement it successfully.

Overall, teachers seem to have strong beliefs about the role that they and their students should play in the classroom that do not seem to fit the required views of the current English language curriculum. Socio-cultural realities seem to have a significant influence on how teachers perceive teachers' and students' classroom roles. But an equally important factor that can be added to the socio-cultural factor is the teachers' prior learning experience at university, as discussed earlier in Section 5.2.1. Such beliefs about teachers' and students' classroom roles might have developed from their prior learning experience as passive learners (Jaimes, 2013). This might affect the implementation of the present curriculum as teachers' views about their roles are incompatible with these newly prescribed roles. Nevertheless, the Libyan English language teachers expressed positive views regarding the idea of teachers assuming a facilitating role, and expressed a willingness to accept that role. However, they spoke of this facilitator role in a rather abstract way, without any specific idea of how this role could be performed in their classrooms.

#### 6.3.5.3 Teachers' Beliefs About Students' Learning Abilities

The third influential belief that Libyan teachers hold about teaching and learning is their belief about their students' learning abilities. The teachers' views that their students lack sufficient learning abilities might also influence their classroom behaviour, and, hence, the implementation of curriculum reform endeavours (Zohar and Dori, 2003, Levin, 2015a, Lucas et al., 2015). As the present English language curriculum in Libya demands teachers and students adopt new classroom roles, many of these roles seem to be challenging to adopt, especially the new roles given to students, such as their need to become active learners. This may cause students to appear weak and unable to engage in activities by which they construct their own learning. This does in deed appear to be the case in Libya, where participating teachers seem to have developed strong beliefs about their students' learning abilities, which in turn seem to have influenced teachers' classroom practices, and hence their commitment to implementing the present English language curriculum. Many participant teachers expressed concerns about their low-achieving students. For example, Belgasem believed that his students lack the necessary skills to engage in communicative activities. Similarly, Anwar was worried about his students' reading abilities. He reported having to write an entire reading passage on the board so that his students could follow him as he read it. During classroom observation sessions, students seemed to lack the essential pre-requisites for language learning, such as the knowledge of correct word pronunciation, the ability to form correct spoken utterances, and reading fluency. It seems that the teachers believed that their students still needed the basics of English language learning before they could proceed to a more advanced level. All of these factors had an impact on the type and extent of pedagogical learning that took place in the classroom.

According to well-established learning theories, learning is considered to be linear and sequential. Learning outcomes are ordered from simple, lower-order thinking activities, such forming grammatically correct sentence structures and correctly spelling words, to more complex and higher-order ones. Higher-order thinking tasks, such as problem solving and meaning making, are thought to take place only when the basic and pre-requisite learning has been accumulated (Anderson and Bloom, 2001). This implies that the higher-order skills that are developed later on in the sequence must not be introduced until the pre-requisite skills have been mastered (Shepard, 1991). As Shepard (1991) notes, according to behaviourist theories, when higher-order learning tasks are divided into smaller parts that are ordered

sequentially, the learner becomes ready to accept the more complex parts that require higher-order thinking once the learner has mastered the earlier, simpler parts that were broken down. Thus, low-achieving learners may require more lower-order instruction because they would otherwise struggle to go beyond the early stages of the learning process (Zohar et al., 2001). This seems to correspond to the beliefs that the Libyan English language teachers hold about their students' learning abilities. Anwar believed that his students lacked the essential pre-requisites for English language learning. For example, he believed that his students still did not know how to use English properly or engage in meaningful conversation. Therefore, it might be argued that engaging Libyan students in higher-order thinking activities, as suggested by the present English language curriculum, would be a difficult task for Libyan teachers. Even those who are able to motivate and help their students to overcome their learning challenges, may be unable to engage their students in higher-order activities because they believe that their students lack the bases for language learning. This demonstrates that the teachers' commitment to adhering to the principles and achieving the objectives of the present English language curriculum is influenced by their views about their students' learning capabilities.

#### 6.3.5.4 Teachers' Beliefs About Societal Culture

The final influential belief identified in this study concerns the views that Libyan teachers hold about societal culture. Beliefs about Libya's social culture in relation to English language teaching and learning also seem to have a significant impact on teachers' classroom decisions. In particular, many of the participating teachers were concerned about how society regards English language teachers. Libyan society views English language teachers as the most knowledgeable persons in the field and as the ones entrusted with transferring the knowledge to children (Orafi, 2008). Rafeeq and Ali, for example, are evidently influenced by these societal views. They believe that society looks to them as the expert with the right knowledge and methods whose duty it is to impart that knowledge to their students effectively. Therefore it can be argued that teachers' teaching preferences also reflect their cultural background (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). It is important to note that conceptions of both teaching and learning differ from culture to culture (Skott, 2015). In one culture, for example, teachers might be viewed as knowledge holders, while, in another culture, they are viewed as facilitators (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). In Libyan culture, societal expectations about teachers and learners are very influential. A good teacher is seen as one who controls

and directs learners and who maintains a respectful distance between themselves and their learners (Orafi and Borg, 2009). Teachers must make sure that they impart knowledge correctly and appropriately. Thus, according to these traditional views, an effective teacher is one who knows what is useful and important for their students and the major source of assistance, while learners are solely seen as passive recipients of all the teachers' expertise (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Since the teacher is the authority in the classroom, unexpected student talk is considered interruptive behaviour and is thought to reflect an absence of teacher control (Hall, 2017, Richards and Rodgers, 2014). This view is reflected in Libyan students' tendency to remain quiet in class (as noticed in the classroom observations) and to answer questions individually only when called upon to do so by the teacher. Unsurprisingly, this belief also contributed to a teacher-oriented approach becoming the dominant approach to language teaching in Libya.

In contrast, some other cultures consider teaching to be a teacher-facilitated practice and a communicative process. In this view, teaching involves forming close interpersonal relations with learners to encourage individual learner creativity and to foster independent learning by making learners question and challenge what is said by their teachers (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). As the culture embedded in the present English language curriculum in Libya is a Western one which conceptualises teaching and learning as communicative processes, this seems to be inconsistent with the views which Libyan society holds about English education.

Therefore, it is important to note that teachers' pedagogical beliefs might be significantly affected by societal attitudes, which differ, as discussed earlier, from one context to another. The beliefs which teachers hold about English language education often depend on their local community. According to Walker et al. (2004, p. 131), 'local community contexts are large determinants in the extent and nature of societal attitudes' and 'when teachers internalize dominant societal messages, they bring them directly into their schools and classrooms'. The claim made by Walker et al. (2004) seems to reflect what the Libyan English language teachers bring with them into the language classroom. Indeed, this is applicable not only to teachers, who are influenced by such cultural views about teaching and learning, but also to students, who, through daily social interaction with their parents, can also develop certain beliefs about English language learning, including their views about their role in the classroom.

The above conceptions that are common in traditional Libyan education have affected the practices of English language education and the expectations of what qualities a good teacher and a good learner should possess. This highlights the specific cultural and educational values that can prevent teachers from implementing CLT. The traditional Libyan model of teaching is one that regards the learner as an empty vessel, or as a 'pint pot', as Maley terms it (1982, cited in Hu, 2002). The findings suggest that it is important to consider the differences between Libyan and Western cultures when applying CLT in English language classrooms. This means that for an educational approach to be suitable for both contexts, it should be sensitive to the cultural and pedagogical realities (Hu, 2002, Qiao and Tan, 2008). This links to an important notion in the field of English language teaching (particularly CLT), namely, sensitive pedagogy, also known as "culture-sensitive pedagogy" (Thomas, 1997). Sensitive or culture-sensitive pedagogy concerns the melding of 'political, economic and cultural dimensions in order to accommodate a "global culture'' (ibid., p. 13). In this era of globalisation, many educational cultures have been imported from Western contexts to many non-Western contexts around the world (Nguyen et al., 2006). For example, Western teaching methodologies such as the CLT approach have been transferred to many countries, including Libya, to develop them politically and economically. However, importing a global educational culture into a different culture with a different educational background tends not to prove very successful due to the different prevalent cultural pedagogies (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Thus, Thomas (1997) stresses the need to identify different cultural pedagogies and describe the impact they may have on improving educational quality. Based on his understanding of pedagogy, he proposes a model of culture-sensitive pedagogy. The model attempts to accommodate both new and old values and to place new knowledge and skills in the old context. The model consists of four components of pedagogy: the epistemological component, the process component, the contextual component, and the personalistic component. The epistemological component refers to the knowledge that teachers have in relation to what and how to teach. In this view, teachers should already have the philosophical framework to guide them as they implement a certain teaching approach, e.g. a learner-centred approach. Arguably, without this knowledge or philosophical framework, pedagogy will only be considered an 'instructional process with broadly accepted methods of delivery and predictable learner-teacher interactions' (ibid., p. 16). The process component refers to classroom teaching activities, such as planning, evaluating, and instructions that are associated with teachers' decision making. The contextual component relates to 'the socio-cultural matrix of which language, religion and cultural traditions

provide a unique profile to the practice and development of pedagogy in any culture' (ibid., p. 16). The last component is the personalistic component, which refers to the role of the personal values that motivate teachers to improve the quality of their pedagogy. These four components of pedagogy offer a clear analysis of culture-related pedagogies as they highlight knowledge (epistemology), activities (process), cultural attitudes (context) and personal values (personal). Therefore, when endeavouring to import a Western pedagogy into a non-Western context, it is important to conduct a careful a cultural analysis of the target context based on these four components. The results of that analysis should 'provide knowledge and experiences for making each of the pedagogy's components more culturally enriching and appropriate to the cultural needs of learners and teachers' (Nguyen et al., 2006, p. 15).

In relation to this research, Thomas's model of culture-sensitive pedagogy can be applied to encourage Libyan English teachers to accept and implement a Western pedagogy like CLT. Since the participant teachers seemed to share the personalistic component of CLT, as evidenced in the positive views they expressed about the present curriculum in general and CLT in particular, it is highly possible that the other components can be developed, especially the epistemological component, which is vital for developing the Libyan teachers' knowledge about teaching and learning. As argued in Section 6.3.1 above, this can be achieved by offering higher education programmes in which teachers, especially language teachers, learn about English language teaching and learning.

By and large, it would appear that CLT was imported to the Libyan context without conducting any prior cultural analysis. But the question here is: Who should conduct the analysis? The Libyan educational authorities or the British publishing company that constructed the curriculum (Garnet)? In my view, expatriate educators, i.e. those working for Garnet, should have carried out the analysis prior to introducing CLT. A similar view is expressed by Gu (2005), who suggests that if CLT is to be promoted in China, expatriate educators need to understand the local culture of teaching and learning and engage in discussions with teachers in order to bridge the cultural gap between the donor and the recipient cultures. Thus, if the intention is to promote better education globally so that societies become more developed, rather than merely to make money out of curriculum making, the process of importing culturally different teaching and learning approaches to different contexts should be systematic and research-based.

Beliefs about teaching and learning, especially the beliefs about teachers' and students' new roles and their impact on teaching, mirror the idea of mediating "tools" in CHAT. In CHAT, activity is mediated by the beliefs that the subjects (English language teachers, in our case) hold about the activity (Koszalka and Wu, 2004). Similar to the effect of physical tools on teaching, personal or mental tools seemed to mediate the Libyan teachers' implementation of the curriculum.

## 6.4 Rules: School Culture and Societal Views About Teaching and Learning

The activities undertaken by teachers towards achieving the desired outcomes are also influenced by their school cultures. For example, the examination system set up by the national educational administrators influenced the Libyan teachers' commitment to achieving the goals of the new curriculum. Libya has traditional, knowledge-based examinations that do not assess the students' communicative competence. Therefore, the teachers in this study tended to teach to the exam. In other words, their primary goal was to help their students pass their exams by teaching them about content that would most likely be included in the exam. Additionally, the teachers felt that the class duration (40-45 minutes) was insufficient for carrying out cooperative activities and for developing students' motivation to engage in these activities. In addition to school culture and its impact on teachers, socio-cultural rules were also found to have a significant impact on teachers' practices. For example, their language teaching was greatly influenced by the traditional, socially constructed views that their society holds of English language teachers and learners. People in Libya view teachers in general as the holders and transmitters of knowledge and as classroom managers, while students are viewed as passive recipients of that knowledge (Abukhattala, 2015).

The school culture and the societal views about teaching and learning presented above and their impact on language teaching in Libya correspond to another important element of CHAT – the "rules". Rules play a key role in the activity system. If there are certain rules within an activity system, the activity (language teaching, in our case) is likely to be influenced either positively or negatively by these rules (Engeström, 2001). For this research, the rules stated above complicated the Libyan teachers' implementation of the curriculum in general and of CLT in particular.

## 6.5 Community and Division of Labour: Suggested Roles and Teachers' Histories Related Roles

"Community" (a core feature of CHAT) refers to people with multiple points of view, traditions and interests who share the same object (goal) as the subject (teachers), such as school principals, curriculum developers, and so on. "Division of labour" refers to the amount of activity that is allocated to an actor in a community. According to Engeström (2001), the division of labour within an activity creates different roles for the individual actors; the actors bring with them their own diverse histories, while the activity system has its own history as depicted in its rules and conventions. My research findings suggest that community and division of labour seem to have played a mediating role in the participating teachers' actions (teaching). In our case, the research participants were required by the language curriculum developers (the members of the community) to play a facilitating rather than a managerial role. As my research findings suggest, the teacher participants brought with them to the classrooms their own diverse perspectives about teaching and learning. For example, they seemed to hold a history of the perceived role that they and their students need to play in the language classroom. These perspectives, however, were in conflict with the new role suggested by the community members, and, thus, the "labour" of being a facilitator of students' learning appeared to represent a real challenge for most of my research participants.

The suggested roles and the teachers' related histories with these roles correspond to the element of division of labour in CHAT. The division of labour element in CHAT suggests different roles for different actors; the actors bring with them their own diverse histories, while the activity system has its own history, as depicted in its rules and conventions (Engeström, 2001). When teachers are required to carry out a new form of labour (new teaching practices), their prior history with that labour (teaching) overrides the rules and conventions attached to their newly assigned labour.

In conclusion, CHAT is useful for describing the activity system of the Libyan English language teachers. CHAT helps us to understand the interaction of the personal and contextual features that shaped the teachers (the subject), their teaching practices (the actions in the activity system), and their teaching goals (the objects and outcomes of the activity system). CHAT can also be useful to describe the activity systems of teachers trying to

implement educational reform in other contexts. Overall, CHAT has enabled me to elucidate the very complex issues that secondary English language learning and teaching in Libya has been facing in the last 18 years or so, following the implementation of the current English curriculum.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

## 7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present my conclusions based on the discussion of Chapter 6. Firstly, I will return to my research questions and present my findings in relation to these. I will then identify the key further issues that emerged beyond the original research questions. Following this, I will present the implications for higher education in Libya and for the Libyan education system in general. Finally, I will discuss the study's limitations and recommend directions for future research.

## 7.2 Conclusions from the Research

### 7.2.1 Research Questions Answered

In relation to the first question, which sought to understand how the Libyan secondary English teachers perceived the new curriculum, the data from the vignette conversations and the first interview suggest that their perceptions are compatible with the curriculum and the learning philosophy underpinning it (learner-centred teaching). However, the observational data suggest the opposite. The teachers' classroom practices were mostly teacher-centred. Their observed practices were mostly in the role of classroom managers and knowledge transmitters rather than facilitators of their students' learning. The data from the follow-up interview, when the teachers were asked about their observed practices, suggest that the teachers hold incompatible beliefs about the implementation of the curriculum. As argued in Chapter 3, the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning can facilitate or hinder the teachers' implementation of curricular reforms. Therefore, the participants' perceptions about teaching and learning that are incompatible with the reforms hindered the participants' uptake of the reforms, as reflected in their observed classroom practice.

As to the second question, regarding the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the dissemination of the innovation, the data from the interview suggest that the participant teachers perceived the support that they received in relation to the implementation of the curriculum was insufficient. As I argued in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4.5), without providing sufficient support to teachers in the form of a series of professional development programmes, teachers may encounter serious difficulties in attempting to put educational reform into

practice. The fact that the participant teachers received almost no support led them to revert to their traditional practices, thereby violating the principles of the present curriculum.

As to third and final question concerning how the participant teachers implemented the CLT policies, what these teachers knew, believed and thought about CLT was reflected in their classroom practice. Observational data suggest that most of the observed practices were teacher-centred and traditional teaching practices were generally employed. The data from the follow-up interviews suggest that the participants' commitment to using CLT was constrained by several factors, including physical and organisational factors, beliefs about students' weak independent learning capacities, beliefs about the local social culture, and beliefs about teachers' and students' roles in the classroom. All of these factors had a great impact on the participants' perceptions and practice. In fact, both the school culture and the teachers' beliefs about CLT reinforced their out-dated conceptions of teaching. The poor support the participants received in their schools when striving to implement CLT and CL, as well as the incompatible school culture, the traditional performance-based examination system, and the lack of the necessary facilities all combined to make the participants reluctant, if not unable, to implement the new curriculum in their classes.

### 7.2.2 Additional Key Findings

If we look beyond the answers to the research questions, this research study also uncovered some important findings in relation to the historical existence of constraints to CLT implementation, as discussed above. The existence of these constraints for about two decades might be explained by these new important findings that my research data revealed: teacher isolation and traditional learning experiences at higher education.

#### 7.2.2.1 Teacher isolation

The interview data suggest that the curriculum reform in Libya was only concerned with a holistic reform of the old English curriculum, with no intention to reform other curricular areas such as Arabic language learning. Other curricular areas and their teaching remained untouched. Consequently, this left teachers feeling isolated; they were concerned that they were the only teachers who were required to change their teaching approaches. As discussed in Chapter 6, teachers came to realise that it was almost impossible to have their voices heard regarding the challenges they are confronted with in relation to the implementation of the

curriculum in general and CLT in particular as they were the only agents needing to implement the change. In turn, this realisation led the participant teachers to conclude that it is very difficult to implement the change as long as the concerns they raise are ignored.

#### 7.2.2.2 Traditional Learning Experiences at Higher Education

The interview data suggest that the participants' prior language learning experiences at university had been traditional and teacher based. Such learning experiences appear to have influenced the participants' teaching practices. Indeed, it seems that what and how prospective teachers learn in higher education later shapes their future teaching practices. As discussed in Chapter 6, I am familiar with how university students are taught and how they learn because I myself am a university English language teacher. Teaching and learning is traditional and teacher centred and the English language curriculum at our university is, by and large, knowledge based. At university, students learn passively, "filled" with ready-to-consume knowledge. They merely recycle that knowledge and reproduce it in their mid-term and final examinations. During the four-year learning journey, our students have no role in controlling or reflecting on that knowledge. This all seems to have contributed to the situation today in relation to the implementation of the present English language curriculum.

## 7.3 Implications

Libya's Ministry of Education requires all of the country's high school English teachers to implement the CLT approach in line with the new communicative-based English language curriculum introduced in 2000. By and large, the new curriculum seems to have gained acceptance among teachers. My research participants thought favourably of it, particularly of CLT as an approach. Their positive attitudes indicate the strong potential for applying CLT in the Libyan context. However, almost 20 years later, traditional teaching methods are still prevalent. This is due to various barriers. The barriers that hindered the implementation of CLT, and hence the entire 2000 English language curriculum, have been explored and discussed in this paper.

First and foremost, the study considered the practical implications for universities, university curriculum makers, and university English language teachers, especially for those who are in favour of a learner-centred ideology. Greater efforts are required to prepare strong constructivist teachers. This can be achieved not only by educating student teachers about

how to teach, but also by providing them with independent learning experiences so that they develop a sense that language learning is best learned by involving young school learners in a journey of independent learning. From a CHAT perspective, such provision can provide a mental tool to support teachers to accommodate new perceptions about independent learning and to eliminate contradictions in their belief systems by altering their negative beliefs about independent learning/learner-centred language education. This can be achieved by designing a good university curriculum that meets the needs of the students' future careers in teaching. As discussed earlier, Libya's university English language teachers have the power to design different materials for different English language subjects. Thus, reforming the university English language curriculum, including the examination procedures, would constitute a simple and very good starting point for developing constructivist school teachers.

Second, the findings suggest a need for in-service or continuous professional development. As pointed out by the research participants, there is a need to develop knowledge and teaching skills by engaging in adequate teacher development programmes at an early stage (before they join the teaching profession). Moreover, they require in-service teaching development. In addition, most of the participants stated that the inadequate teacher education they received was entirely lecture-based and theory oriented. Thus, rather than providing teachers with subject-matter knowledge, educators such as university teachers should help teachers recognise what knowledge they can use to overcome their classroom challenges, and how the given educational theory employed in their schools can be applied when facing such challenges (Fang, 1996). This reflects another key idea in CHAT: the supportive tool. This implies that the more support teachers receive in relation to doing an activity, the less they will struggle when carrying out the activity and attempting to achieve the object.

Finally, the findings suggest that any future changes in the English language curriculum should be preceded by a deep cultural analysis (something that did not occur prior to introducing CLT to the Libyan context). Such analysis will ensure that the change can be effectively implemented by the country's English language teachers. This consideration is associated with the notion of sensitive pedagogy discussed earlier, in Section 6.3.3.4.

Significant recommendations in relation to the identified contextual and educational constraints are listed below, in line with CHAT perspectives.

1- Adequate teacher education at higher education and continuous professional training courses. CHAT suggests that it is important to provide individual (regardless of their

profession) with the 'tools' that could support them to accomplish the given 'activity' (Engeström, 2001). However, these courses should not be lecture-based; instead, applied practice should also be provided.

2- At the classroom level, smaller class sizes can significantly facilitate group work. Appropriate classroom infrastructure, such as round tables and visual aids, can make CLT activities more successful. Moreover, more time should be given for English language teachers to cover course contents and to evaluate students.
3- Immediate reform should be made to the current examination system to incorporate procedures that examine students' communicative abilities. Some teaching and learning resources should be acquired by schools to improve classroom conditions and to support teaching and learning.

Point (2) and (3) above are also referred to by CHAT as 'rules' which Engeström (2001) explained had a mediating effect on individuals' activity (English language teachers in this case). Having said this, and in the light of CHAT, school rules in my research context must be revised in order to reduce the effect of these 'rules' on teachers' 'activity' (teaching) to the minimum.

The implications discussed in my research findings are intended to push forward the Libyan education system in the right direction so that the key objective – that is that learners should use English language more effectively – is met.

## 7.4 Contribution to Knowledge

To my knowledge, this is the first study that has highlighted the issue of teacher isolation in the Libyan context and the disjuncture that exists between higher education programmes for teachers and teachers' practices and needs in the Libyan language classrooms. The contribution of my research to the field of English language teaching lies in these two concepts. This study has filled a gap in the literature, as few studies have researched Libyan English language teachers in Libyan secondary schools. Although previous research on the conflict between policy and practice has discussed teachers' beliefs as the main reason for the failure of the present curriculum, nothing has been mentioned about how teachers learn at higher education institutions or how the voices of in-service English language teachers are ignored due to their isolation, as the only teachers required to bring about the educational change. These are gaps that my research findings have filled. While the findings of this study

mirror other research findings carried out in different contexts, the present study's findings can serve as another piece of evidence to highlight the incongruity between policy and practice.

As a university teacher, I felt it particularly necessary to investigate the tension between policy and practice because we always face the direct implications of this tension as we must deal with the teaching challenges presented by the new in-take of low-achieving students at our universities. My reading of the literature on educational change and my research findings informed by the element of CHAT made me more sympathetic with English language teachers in Libya. I have come to appreciate the challenges and complexities that teachers have been confronted with for almost two decades. It is of vital importance to recognise that effective teachers play key roles in education. In order to make school teachers effective, the Libyan educational authorities must first understand the great role that Libyan teachers in general play in providing good education for our children, and that all Libyan teachers deserve our respect and support.

Theoretically, this study shows the value of using CHAT and its elements to interpret research findings. I believe that the notions of activity and mediation in CHAT provided an examination of the interaction of the personal and contextual features that shaped teachers' pedagogical practices and their teaching goals. Employing the notions of activity and mediation can help determine the potentially contradictory relationship between teachers' beliefs and their activity aimed at achieving a particular goal/outcome – CLT, in our case. Furthermore, they can help investigate whether teachers' chosen teaching methods (typically traditional) were only related to their educational beliefs about teaching and learning, or also due to the interactions of their beliefs with their surroundings, or, in CHAT terms, the mediating artefacts – the tools, rules, and division of labour.

This research study does not offer a panacea for the problems associated with implementing the new English curriculum in Libya, but it does endeavour to make a significant contribution to clarifying the many different and complex issues related to its implementation, and to elucidating which areas can be addressed first.

## 7.5 Recommendations for Implementing CLT in Libyan Classrooms

The findings of this research study indicate that CLT is confronted with socio-cultural factors that make its implementation in Libya difficult. Thus, the crucial significance of cultural factors should not be disregarded. However, this does not necessarily mean that the inappropriateness of CLT for the Libyan context constitutes a rejection of the approach itself, or the possibility of its effectiveness in English language classrooms in Libya. What is very much needed to reconcile CLT and culturally influenced practice in Libya is to 'adapt rather than adopt CLT into [its] English teaching' (Li, 1998, p. 696). Understanding the conflict between the social realities and pedagogical practices is important in order to develop a pedagogy that will be more appropriate for the target contexts. In this case, as discussed earlier, the model of sensitive or culturally sensitive pedagogy developed by Thomas (1997) can be used to address the issue of culturally inappropriate pedagogy. But it is important to reiterate here that it is the responsibility of expatriate educators (Garnet) to apply the model, rather than the Libyan educators, as the former are the experts in CLT.

In conclusion, CLT is an emerging teaching method in Libyan English classrooms. Despite its various limitations of CLT and the hindrances to its ultimate implementation in the research context (and, perhaps, across the country), the teachers in this study were aware of the potential benefits that the current English language curriculum could provide for students. This research study has attempted to explore the constraints affecting the implementation of the communicative-based English language curriculum. But, more importantly, it has attempted to explore the factors that brought these constraints into existence in the first place. The research study has identified a conflict between CLT principles and techniques and teacher expectations of teaching and learning that are embedded in Libya's teaching and learning culture. The research has reported various difficulties associated with CLT. Some of these difficulties concern CLT itself, while others are associated with past teaching and learning experiences. From the discussion of the role of Libyan teachers, learning styles, and social context, it should be emphasised that promoters of Western educational philosophies need to consider the non-Western context, too. This is especially important when it comes to deciding what counts as appropriate curricula and teaching methodologies, and in order to consider the knowledge, beliefs, and pedagogical behaviours of non-Western contexts. However, as English language is taught in Libya mainly as a foreign language (which means

that English is learned mainly for outer communication purposes), teachers and students need to change their understandings of how English language is taught and learned today. They need to understand that the English language is a useful tool for connecting to the rest of the world.

Another conclusion of this study is that teacher education seems to have influenced the participants' conceptions as well as their practices. Based on my experience as a university English language teacher, I believe that the participants should have been enabled to construct their own knowledge of CLT during their teacher education at university so that they would be able to translate it into effective future practice. Instead of receiving traditional instruction, prospective teachers ought to be instructed using a constructivist approach to language learning. They should be given learning opportunities by which they can negotiate meaning with peers and teachers. This suggests new roles for us as university language teachers. We need to provide our students with the right learning experience at the right time, while allowing plenty of room for them to reflect on their learning. This experience would enable the students to reach a better understanding of the principles underlying the university's pedagogy by comparing them with what they already know about foreign language teaching and learning (existing beliefs). In other words, the new learning experience would challenge their existing beliefs of English language teaching and learning, which they acquired as a result of their own learning experiences as university language learners. Unless they experience first-hand the different forms of language teaching and learning (traditional vs progressive), Libyan teachers will most likely misinterpret the new approach, and, hence, implementation of CLT in their classrooms will remain ineffective.

Besides the participants' prior learning experiences as university students, the school context and the social culture also had a powerful impact on their classroom practices. First of all, the participants did not receive enough professional support when they were striving to implement the present English language curriculum. Moreover, the physical working environment did not lend itself to cooperative learning activities. As the school culture was based on knowledge-based examinations, it was almost impossible for some participant teachers to translate the CLT into their practices.

In short, although the revised curriculum has officially been in operation since 2000, my research findings demonstrate that the English language curriculum reform has not been implemented effectively. Traditional teaching practices still dominate in most of the

participant teachers' English language classes. All in all, the lack of teacher training in higher education, the poor initial and entirely missing in-service professional development, and the school and social culture combined to make it very difficult for the English language teachers in the research context to meet the objectives of the 2000 English language curriculum. This does not mean, however, that the principles underlying the new curriculum are wrong. As the findings suggest, many of the participant teachers expressed positive views regarding the curriculum and learner-centeredness, but a major concern for them is their sense of isolation regarding the challenges they are confronted with in relation to the implementation of the present curriculum, which results in their voices being ignored.

In light of the above conclusions, the researcher offers the following recommendations to improve the implementation of the present English language curriculum. Firstly, the university English curriculum needs to be reformed, as does the teaching approach, in order to be consistent with Libya's school context and culture. Secondly, there is a need for greater coordination and communication between teacher training programmes, schools, and curriculum designers. Lastly, further research should be conducted to extend the findings and contributions of this research.

## 7.6 Limitations and Future Directions

There are certain concerns that I consider to be limitations to my research study. Although I had intended to collect data over a three-week period, it took me some time to get permission from the local educational authority in the city to start collecting the data. This was mainly because the president of the local educational authority was on annual leave. After four days, however, I managed to get permission from the deputy. This left me with almost two weeks within which to complete the data collection process. Although I felt that this was sufficient time for my data collection from the 10 participant teachers, it would have been better to have arranged for a longer period for two reasons. Firstly, four teachers withdrew for unknown reasons, and I, therefore, had to look for additional new participants. Secondly, during my observations of the teachers, the observation data became repetitive as all of the teachers followed the same techniques and carried out almost the same classroom activities. The reason why the data became repetitive is that I decided to observe them teaching the same first unit of the curriculum. The consequence of this decision was that the teachers' practices were almost identical. This outcome could have been avoided if I had been able to make use

of a longer data collection period, as I could have observed my research participants teaching different units of the curriculum, which would have required different techniques and activities to be used by the teachers. I would therefore have been able to observe each participant teacher's practice related to a different unit (each successive unit is more advanced than the previous one) and how they managed their limited class time according to the length of that unit. Nevertheless, the shorter data collection period did not impact the quality of my data. However, if I had had a greater time available for my classroom observations, I might have stood a better chance of gathering more insights with which to increase my understanding of the participants' classroom practices. As (Creswell, 2014b) suggests, spending a prolonged time in the study field can help the researcher deepen their understanding of the case under investigation. Moreover, as research studies involve the collection of detailed information, researchers tend to 'spend an extended period of time examining the case in its natural surroundings' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 152). In relation to my research, however, this was not possible as the unpredictable political situation in Libya made any extension of the fieldwork study risky. For example, the starting date for the school year in which my data collection started (2016) was delayed by two weeks for unknown political reasons. This also affected my arrangements to fly to Libya to start my data collection.

In relation to my classroom observations, many teachers seemed to be lacking confidence in their teaching. Since this was their first time being observed, they appeared to be hesitant and unsure of what they were doing. Waxman (2018, p. 4) argues that 'observer effects may occur because teachers and students are aware that their behaviours are being observed. The presence of an observer may change teacher or student behaviours, perhaps resulting in reactive effects'. I might have been able to remedy this issue by conducting more than one observational session for each teacher. If I had been able to conduct several observational sessions for each teacher, they would have become used to my presence, which would have allowed them to teach naturally. But, as I used other forms of data collection and did not solely rely on my observational data, the quality of my data was not affected.

Another limitation of this research was the fact that I piloted the research instrument in English and conducted the interviews in Arabic. During the pilot study, the vignette conversations and interviews were conducted in English,, while in the actual research, I had to conduct them in Arabic because I was unable to recruit participants from my target schools when four teachers from these schools withdrew for unknown reasons, which meant I was not sure of the English proficiency level of the teachers I managed to recruit from another school.

Therefore, I decided to conduct the research the vignette conversations and interviews in Arabic so as to eliminate any doubt that my English version of the questions would affect the participants' understanding of the questions, and, hence, the overall quality of the findings.

Although this research study has certain limitations, as indeed do other research studies, the findings point to great potential for future research. What is also missing from this research is the voice of the city's young learners. What are their conceptions of learner-centred education? How can they be active individuals in planning and implementing leaner-centred education? How can they support their teachers to implement CLT? Involving the young learners themselves in the research could provide a bank of evidence and, perhaps, a re-conceptualisation of learner-centred education itself. Although this would seem an excellent idea, undertaking such a task can be very difficult as it will require an enormous amount of both time and financial support.

A future study might also compare the findings reported for Libya's high school teachers with findings for teachers of early stages of primary school to identify whether there are differences in the ways that teachers implement CLT with children. There also might be evidence of successful CLT implementation since younger children tend to naturally be more confident in expressing their ideas than older learners. That is, young children, due to their age, tend to be more open to second-language learning and they are more prepared to take risks than older learners (Merritt, 2013).

Moreover, since teacher education programmes are almost non-existent in the local educational institutes, this study proposes further research into the institutional constraints to providing teachers with appropriate teacher education courses. This is of particular importance given the fact that almost all university graduates are directed to the teaching workforce regardless of their specialism. Therefore, a solid base of teacher preparation should be in place for them.

Future research could also be carried out to explore and compare the experiences of secondary teachers of different subject areas in relation to their teaching responsibilities and their commitment to adhering to these responsibilities. This will provide a basis for making comparisons and might provide fruitful insights into the issues around teacher isolation, especially relating to English language teachers, as the only teachers required to implement a new curriculum reform.

## 7.7 Personal Reflections and the Next Steps

In this section, I will comment on how this research study contributed to my own development as a researcher. In addition, I will outline the next steps that I will take when I return to my home country in relation to closing the gap between policy and practice.

This research study helped me develop my research skills in a way that would have been impossible had I not embarked on this journey. In these four years, I have learned the conventions of academic writing and how to construct and develop my arguments. I have also learned how to design and conduct qualitative research and how to collect and analyse qualitative data. I have learned and applied research ethics. For example, I was careful about honesty and integrity of my research both in data collection methods and in reporting research results, taking account of the local and national political and social constraints in the schools involved. I was aware of the potential issues involved in observation of practice and took care to avoid comments which could have been seen to be negative. I also achieved objectivity in my research by aiming to avoid bias in any aspect including research design, data analysis and interpretation. I was also aware of research confidentiality, and to achieve it, I respected anything that was provided by the research participants in confidence. I also followed guidelines on protection of sensitive data such as interview records. Finally, because my research involved people, I made sure that I reduce any possible harm to the minimum by giving no specific information that might identify individuals. In this respect, pseudonyms were used for participants and for schools those participants coming from and average rather than actual teaching experience was given.

All of the knowledge that I have acquired during my research study has provided me with the confidence to carry out the future research needed in the field of English language teaching and learning in my country.

The findings of this research suggest the need for immediate intervention to help prospective teachers understand and commit to the objectives of the present English language curriculum in Libyan schools. Such an intervention could close, or at least narrow, the gap between policy (depicted in the present curriculum and its principles and objectives) and practice (teaching the curriculum as intended). When I return to my country, I will first share the results of my research study with my colleagues and the president of the Department of English Language and Linguistics so that they have a clear idea of the problem and the

possible solutions that I will offer. One possible solution, as discussed in this chapter, is to reform the present English language curriculum in our university. This will primarily involve the reforming of speaking, listening, reading and writing materials, as well as the teaching methods used to teach these subjects, as they are the focus of the present English language curriculum. Other subjects, such as research methods, linguistics, criticism, translation, and phonetics, do not require such reforms as they are geared towards developing students' knowledge, especially at the university level, and these subjects are not taught at the secondary level in Libyan schools. Should the department and my colleagues agree to my proposal to rectify the complex situation in relation to the teaching of English, we will commence work on the reform in the hope that what we teach at the university meets the requirements for teaching the present English language curriculum in the country by preparing effective school teachers.

## 7.8 A Concluding statement

While the findings of this study echo those of other research, they can add further evidence to highlight the incongruity between policy and practice. In addition to the contextual and socio-cultural constraints that have been inhibiting Libyan teachers from implementing the present English language curriculum for over 18 years, the English teachers' isolation and their poor higher education learning experiences (given its lack of learner-centred education) seem to be more influential than the contextual realities. This research study is intended to raise greater awareness of the current issues relating to Libya's secondary English language teaching. The research findings have implications for curriculum makers, policy makers, and higher education institutions. These universities are the primary instrument for preparing effective teachers able to cope effectively with educational change, even where the tools (one important element of CHAT) required for effective curriculum implementation are scarce. The implications of this research may also be useful for other contexts where similar educational issues are present.

Finally, it is important to note that while my research findings will not resolve the bigger issues facing Libya's educational system, they might just represent the first steps in this direction. My research should play an important role by contributing to addressing this huge national problem.

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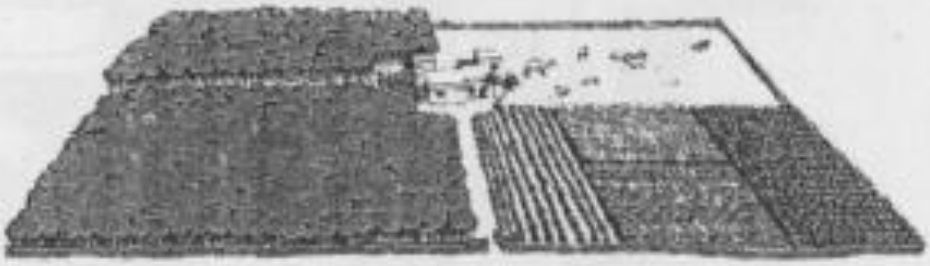
# Appendix

## Appendix A: The previous English language curriculum *English for Libya*. (adapted from Orafi 2008, p. 244-247)

LESSON TWO



A. Ahmad's father, Mr. Fellah, is a farmer. His farm is not big. But it is not small, either. He likes his farm very much. He always says, "My farm is part of me!" From an airplane the farm looks like this:

The big part of the farm is for trees. The other two parts are for animals and wheat and barley. Mr. Fellah grows some vegetables, too. Potatoes, onions and carrots are vegetables.

B. Mr. Fellah works hard. Only his wife and children help him. But he has machines. Machines can help farmers very much. Look at Mr. Fellah. What is he doing? He is working. He is driving a tractor. The tractor is pulling a plough. What does the plough do to the earth? It cuts the earth, and it turns it over.

Mr. Fellah's machines always run well. Why do his machines always run well? Because he always cleans them. He always oils them, too.

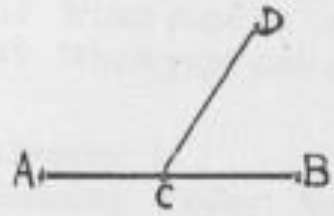
C. AHMAD: Here we are in school again!
ALI: Yes, and we feel fresh and happy.
HANI: We're in Class Two this year. I hope our English lessons will be interesting this year.
WAFI: I hope our Arabic lessons will be interesting, too.
AHMAD: And I hope our other lessons will be interesting.

D. ALI: I'm not good at maths!
HANI: And I'm not good at science!
WAFI: And I'm not good at history!
AHMAD: And I'm not good at geography!
ALI: We'll work hard this year. We'll be good at all our lessons.
AHMAD: We have two new teachers this year. One comes from Derna. The other comes from Sebha. I hope they'll be nice teachers.

WAFI: I hope so. Nice teachers give interesting lessons.

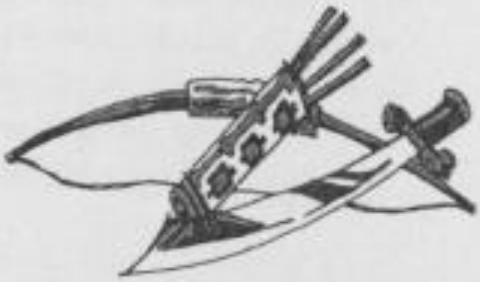
They'll = They will

E. *What's his lesson?*




$A\hat{C}D + D\hat{C}B = 180°$

$H_2O$ = WATER



F. *Answer these questions:*

1. What does Mr.Fellah always say?
2. Why does he say so?,
3. Which part of the farm is for trees?
4. What vegetables does he grow?
5. Is a peach a vegetable or fruit?
6. Does Mr.Fellah work hard?
7. Who helps him on the farm?
8. Why do his machines always run well?
9. What does a plough do to the earth?
10. What day of school is it?
11. How do the pupils feel?

12. Which pupil isn't good at maths?
13. Which pupil isn't good at science?
14. Which pupil isn't good at history?
15. Which pupil isn't good at geography?

G. *Complete:*

Saturday Friday Tuesday Sunday Thursday Wednesday Monday.

1. Saturday is the first day of school.
2. . . . . will be the second day of school.
3. . . . . will be the third day of school.
4. . . . . will be the fourth day of school.
5. . . . . will be the fifth day of school.
6. . . . . will be the sixth day of school.

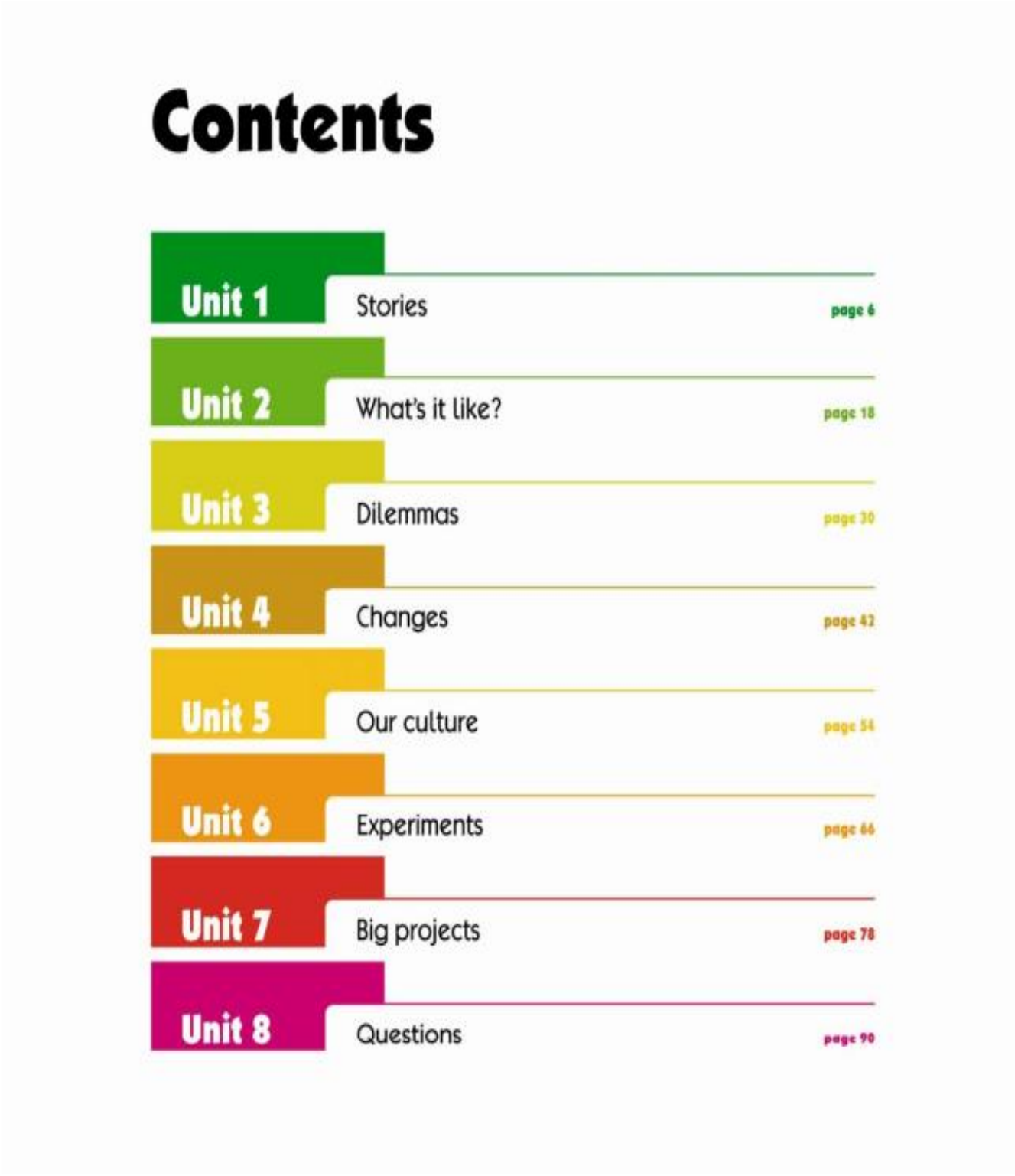
H. *Play this game:*

SON: We have a new pupil in our class.
FATHER: Do you? Where does he come from?
SON: He comes from Zawia.
FATHER: What does he look like?
SON: Well, he has big black eyes, smooth black hair and big ears.

I. *Make sentences from this table:*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you | know | what Ahmad wants? |
| Does he | | what Ali looks like? |
| Does she | | what farmers in Garian grow? |
| Do they | | what schoolgirls in Libya wear? |

**Appendix B: The present curriculum and its structure (adapted from Anderian-Vallance, D. and Schoemann, J. 2008, pp. 4-17)**



# Contents

# Course Summary

| | Reading | Vocabulary | Grammar |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Two lessons | Three lessons | |
| **Unit 1** Stories | Narrative: Crossing the Wadi. | Phrasal verbs 1. | The past perfect. Modal verbs in the past. |
| **Unit 2** What's it like? | Informative article: Life on other planets? | Phrasal verbs 2. | Comparatives with much and many. Must, many, might and can't. |
| **Unit 3** Dilemmas | Texts about philosophical, political and personal dilemmas. | Collocations. | Type 2 conditionals. Conditional sentences. |
| **Unit 4** Changes | Article about Venice: The sinking city. | Phrasal verbs 3. | Continuous tenses. Present perfect continuous tenses. |
| **Unit 5** Our culture | Extracts from an encyclopedia about Arab Culture. | Prepositional phrases. | Clauses with where, when and what. The future. |
| **Unit 6** Experiments | Scientific experiments: Humour is good for you. | Verbs followed by -ing and to. | Reporting statements. Reporting requests and instructions. |
| **Unit 7** Big projects | Informative text: The Aswan High Dam. | Describing dimensions of objects and volumes. Compound adjectives. | Active and passive voice. Past participles. |
| **Unit 8** Questions | Conversations about a job interview. | The language of questions and job interviews. | Indirect questions. Reported questions. |

| Speaking | Writing | Listening | Specialization |
|---|---|---|---|
| **One lesson** | **One lesson** | **One lesson** | **Four lessons** |
| Responding to situations. | A story of emergencies. | Predicting the topic.<br>Listening for key events. | The first stories<br>Aesop's fables<br>The Thousand and One Nights<br>Theatre |
| Giving opinions. | Paragraphs with topic sentences. | Listening for key information. | Man and his environment<br>Man and shelter<br>More about caves<br>A home in space |
| A debate. | Supporting your opinions. | Listening for detail. | Making a good school better<br>The Ambrosia file<br>A problem in the oil industry<br>And what's the solution? |
| Talking about present actions. | E-mails. | Developing listening skills. | Ancient disasters<br>The question of global warming<br>The effects of global warming<br>The changes that we've seen |
| Starting conversations. | Working from notes. | Identifying falling intonation. | A very strange festival<br>A letter from OTV<br>The first sociologist<br>The first professor of sociology |
| Apologizing, explaining and forgiving. | Summary writing. | Listening for key words and numbers. | What sort of person are you?<br>Dress and social behaviour<br>Heredity and environment<br>Employment – what would you like to do? |
| Describing and identifying objects. | Sections of a report. | Listening to complete notes.<br>Listening for the topic and main ideas. | Planning a tour<br>Leptis Magna<br>Egyptian and Libyan agriculture<br>A tour of the Roman baths |
| Asking questions politely and responding. | Writing a report. | Listening in a conference setting. | Young people's leisure activities<br>Finding out what people want<br>Planning and using a questionnaire<br>Preparing a presentation |

# Unit 1 Stories

## Lessons 1 & 2: Reading: Predicting content

### 1. Before you read (Lesson 1)

**A Discuss these questions.**

1. How many different kinds of stories can you think of?

Examples: *funny stories, traditional stories …*

2. What kinds of stories do you like?
3. What kinds of stories don't you like?
4. In your opinion, what are the three most important things in a good story?

**B Look at the pictures for the story on the right and answer the questions.**

1. What do you think happened in the story?
2. What do you think happened between pictures C and D?
3. Make a list of **ten** nouns and **five** verbs that you expect to find in this story.

Examples: Nouns: family, [illegible] shirt, plum

Verbs: *drive, eat*






### 2. While you read

**A Read the first three paragraphs of the story only. Write line numbers from the text for each picture.**

Picture A: line(s) 5–6

Picture B: line(s) _____

Picture C: line(s) _____

Picture D: line(s) _____

Picture E: line(s) _____

**B In pairs, discuss these questions about the five events in the pictures.**

1. Which event is described first in the text?
2. In what order did the five events really happen?
3. In what order are the rest of the events described?
4. Why do you think the writer used this order?

**C Now do Exercise A on Workbook page 4.**

### 3. After you read (Lesson 2)

**A Now do Exercises B to E on Workbook page 4.**

# Crossing the Wadi

The rain was beating down on our car. I had never seen heavier rain in my life. My father, who was driving, couldn't see more than five metres. In the back of the car, my mother was holding my little brother in her arms. His arm was red where a snake had bitten him.

The road was just a rough track, which crossed several small wadis. The wadis had been dry that morning when we had set off for a picnic, but now water was flowing down from the mountains. At the first wadi, it was flowing across the road. Ten minutes later at the second wadi, the water was halfway up the wheels of our 4-wheel-drive. We were only 10 kilometres from the tarmac road and another 20 kilometres from the town and a doctor, but the biggest wadi was still ahead of us.

Khalid was just four years old. Half an hour before, he had been a happy child playing under a beautiful blue sky. Then we had seen dark clouds over the mountains. We had just decided to go home when Khalid ran off alone. When my mother found him, he was crying and the marks of the snake were on his arm.

---

Now Khalid was in great danger. I turned round in the car to look at him. He had stopped crying and his eyes were half-closed.

The car slowed down. The big wadi was in front of us. The rain had almost stopped, so we could see across the wadi. It was about 150 metres wide and half of it was under water. There were no other cars. We drove to the water's edge. The brown water was deep and moving fast. A fallen palm tree was carried past us. It crashed into a rock, was thrown to one side and moved on.

My father looked at the water. He knew this wadi well. He also knew the power and the danger of the water, but he knew we had to cross it. We couldn't wait or go back. We had to go on. He looked for a long time. We kept silent. We knew that he was choosing his route. Then he said, 'We can do it if Allah wishes', and the car moved forward slowly into the water.

## Lesson 3: Vocabulary: Phrasal verbs 1

**Phrasal verbs 1**

We often use verbs that have two parts. The first part is a **verb** and the second part is a preposition like: *up, down, in, out, on, off, round, away, back.*

Examples:
**Come** *in* and **sit** *down*.
*Please* **switch** *off the lights.*

**How many verbs can you think of with up, down, in, out, on, off, round, away or back?**

**A** **Some of these phrasal verbs were in the story from the Reading lesson on page 7. Find them and underline them.**

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| drive on | go back | go on | hurry up | kick off | run off | set off |
| slow down | speak up | speed up | take off | turn round | | |

**B** **Label each picture below with one of the phrasal verbs from the above box.**

1 

2 

3 

4 

**C** **Write the phrasal verbs from Exercise A next to their definitions.**

1. go slower *slow down*
2. go faster _____
3. start a trip _____
4. start a football game _____
5. say something louder _____
6. leave the ground in a plane _____
7. run into the distance _____
8. do something quicker _____
9. continue driving _____
10. continue in the same direction _____
11. return the way that you have come _____
12. turn your body 180 degrees _____

**D** **Now do Exercises A to D on Workbook page 5.**

## Lesson 4: Grammar 1: The past perfect

### 1. The past perfect

**A** **Study the grammar box.**

**The past perfect**

We use the past perfect to describe events that happened before the past events that we are mainly talking about.

Example:

When the man arrived at the airport, the plane **had** already **departed**.
A B

*A happened after B.*

Compare the example with the following use of the **past tense**:

When the man arrived at the airport, the plane **departed**.
A B

*A happened before B.*

**B** **Discuss with a partner. Which underlined event really happened first?**

1. He didn't send the e-mail that he had written.
2. The bus had already left when I arrived at the bus station.
3. She was angry because I had not phoned her.
4. He had been ill, so he didn't go swimming.
5. I didn't buy the T-shirt because I had not brought my money.
6. I had already seen the DVD before so I didn't watch it again.

### 2. Forming the past perfect

**A** **Study the grammar box.**

**Forming the past perfect**

We form the past perfect with *had* + past participle.

| SUBJECT | + | HAD | + | PAST PARTICIPLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I/you | | | | driven |
| he/she/it | | had (not) | | bitten |
| we | | | | stopped |
| they | | | | been |

In spoken English, *had* = *'d* and *had not* = *hadn't*

Examples: *I'd left my key at home.* *The rain hadn't stopped.*

**B** **In the sentences in Exercise B above, circle the subject, underline *had (not)* once and underline the past participle twice.**

**C** **Now do Exercises A and B on Workbook page 6.**

## Lesson 6: Speaking: Responding to situations

**A** **Look at the pictures. What is happening in each one? What do you think happened before?**


**B** **Which expressions on the right go best with the sentences on the left?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. My cousin found a diamond ring. | ☐ a) Oh no! |
| 2. Dad, look outside. I think a car has hit our car. | ☐ b) Who? |
| 3. I did it because my Dad asked me to. | ☐ c) Why not? |
| 4. I couldn't get out. | ☐ d) What?! |
| 5. Somebody told us. | ☐ e) Really? |
| 6. I've lost the key! | ☐ f) Ah, OK. |

**C** **Match the responses on the right with the parts of the situations on the left.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Have I told you about the time I got lost? | ☐ a) Oh dear. Were you ill? |
| 2. Someone phoned the police. | ☐ b) What? How did he do that? |
| 3. A fire started. | ☐ c) Really? What about the firemen? |
| 4. He was working outside. | ☐ d) Yes? What happened next? |
| 5. They didn't know where we were. | ☐ e) Who? The neighbour? |
| 6. I felt terrible. | ☐ f) Why not? Hadn't you told them? |
| 7. He broke both his legs. | ☐ g) Oh no! |
| 8. We helped him to stand up, and … | ☐ h) No. What happened? |
| 9. An ambulance came, and the police. | ☐ i) Ah, OK. What was he doing? |
| 10. He didn't see the stairs. | ☐ j) Why not? Was it dark? |

**D** **Work in pairs. Think of problems or emergencies that could happen in these situations.**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Losing money | An accident in the house | Getting lost | A rainstorm |
| Transport problems | Trouble in the desert | An animal attack | Being hungry |

**E** **Take turns. Student A, imagine you were in one of the situations above. Start a conversation about the situation with Student B. Student B, respond by using responses similar to the ones in Exercise C.**

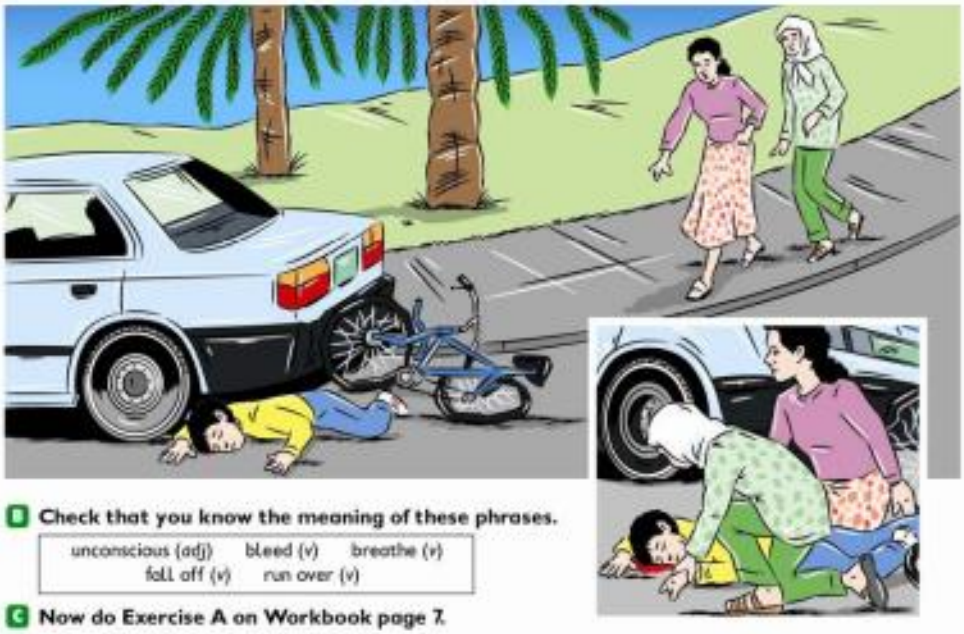
Example:

A: A fire started in the kitchen.
B: Oh dear. How did that happen?
A: The food burnt.

## Lesson 7: Writing: Write a story

### 1. Preparation for writing

**A** **Study the pictures. What do you think happened?**



**B** **Check that you know the meaning of these phrases.**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| unconscious (adj) | bleed (v) | breathe (v) |
| fall off (v) | run over (v) | |

**C** **Now do Exercise A on Workbook page 7.**

**D** **Read these questions. With a partner, make up a story using the questions as a guide.**

1. Where were the two girls walking?
2. What did they see?
3. How had the accident happened?
4. What did the girls do?
5. How was the boy?
6. Had the girls learnt first aid?
7. How did they get help?
8. What happened next?
9. What happened in the end?

### 2. Writing

**A** **Write your story from Exercise D above in your notebook. It should be 120 words or more.**

**B** **Now underline all of the verbs in the story you wrote.**

**C** **When you have finished, check your work for mistakes. Are the verb tenses correct?**

## Lesson 12: Listening: Listen for specific information

**A** **Read the text about the people in the picture.**

It is Saturday morning. Jamal and Bruce work in the same office. Bruce is a young Englishman who arrived in Libya two weeks ago.

**B** **What do you think they are talking about? Think of at least five different possible topics.**

Example: work, ...

**C** **Read the questions. Then listen to Bruce's story and answer them.**

1. What did Bruce do yesterday morning?
2. What had he forgotten?
3. Where was he when he remembered?

**D** **Read these words and phrases. Then listen to Jamal's story and tick (✓) the words and phrases that you hear. Which word or phrase is not in the story?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. a disaster | ☐ | 7. the food | ☐ |
| 2. a picnic | ☐ | 8. thrown away | ☐ |
| 3. remembered | ☐ | 9. the wrong box | ☐ |
| 4. go back | ☐ | 10. hungry | ☐ |
| 5. a lot of food | ☐ | 11. a good day | ☐ |
| 6. a good beach | ☐ | | |

**E** **Make sentences about Jamal's story using the words in Exercise D. Listen again if necessary.**

Example: Jamal's weekend was a disaster.

**F** **Work in pairs. Take turns to tell Bruce and Jamal's stories. When you are listening, sound interested by using the responses you have studied.**

Example:

A: Have you heard what happened to Jamal?

B: No. What?

# Appendix C: Research vignettes. (English version)

### Introduction

Thanks for participating in my research. I will start by introducing four short scenarios to you. At each scenario, there will be a few questions for you to answer. Please be assured that there is NO right or wrong answer. The questions are expected to be answered by participants very differently. The stories are generally about English language education, including English language teaching, teachers' conceptualisation/philosophy of teaching and learning etc. Please take enough time to think about the questions before you give an answer. If you have any difficulties understanding the questions or if you want me to rephrase them, please don't hesitate to ask me to.

### General Question

What does teaching mean to you? How do you conceptualise teaching and learning? What are the best words you can think of to describe teaching and learning?

### Scenario 1

Hala is English teacher who has the notion that the classroom is a learning environment that is a practical, simplified version of wider society. So she sees the purpose of the class is to allow students to test their understanding of the subjects, to join group work activities, and to share their learning experiences with classmates. She believes that students are responsible for their own learning and that they should do all their work with little help being given by her. She argues that students should obtain methods of examining and solving their own problems to better understand their own experiences. Therefore, she believes that her only role is to facilitate her students' learning.

A. How do you view Hala's conception of teaching? Please discuss your answer.

### Scenario 2

In a group discussion, teachers of English language are discussing students' learning dilemmas. One teacher, Ahmed, complains about the requirement imposed by curriculum planners on English teachers to use student-centred approaches rather than traditional

approaches. He said “it is really hard to follow these instructions recommended by the curriculum planners simply because they are different from how I was taught by my English teacher umm.. I remember that my teacher used to give all information necessary for our learning… yea I mean he translated and explained almost everything and all students including me had to memorise the lessons for the sake of passing the examination … I like that method and it worked for us just fine and we were successful students at that time but today I am struggling to use new strategies and methods. I am also concerned that the exam system which focuses mainly on testing students’ grammatical knowledge will not contain parts which will test other curriculum elements such as listening, speaking, writing and reading.

A. Do you agree with Ahmed’s argument?
B. How do you find using the new strategies and methods in teaching?

## Scenario 3

Manal and Fatma are English language teachers in Al-Jala secondary school. They are discussing the purpose of English language literacy. Manal views education as the foundation of other cultures and as an essential factor in preparation for adult life. She says that “we as teachers have responsibility to educate the next generations, introducing them to the best that has been known and instilling in them the love of knowledge and culture for their own sake’. On the other hand, Fatma think about the purpose of education differently. She rather stresses the importance of education in terms of the practical business of ensuring that young people receive the knowledge they need to secure good jobs and a fulfilling career, and have the resilience and moral character to take control of challenges and succeed.

A- Which views do you agree with? Why?

Vignettes: Arabic version

شكرا لمشاركتك في بحثي هذا. سأقوم بتقديم سؤال افتتاحي وثلاث قصص قصيره وفي كل قصه هناك بعض الاسئلة للاجابةعليها. ليس هناك اجابة صحيحه أو خاطئة في هذه القصص فلهذا لا تقلق ابدا بخصوص هذا النقطه. من المتوقع جدا أن الاجابات على هذا الاسئلة ستختلف من شخص الى آخر. القصص هي بخصوص تدريس اللغة الانجليزية متضمنة ايضا نظره المعلم الفلسفية بخصوص التعليم والتدريس الخ...

رجاء خذ الوقت الكافي قبل اعطائك للاجابه واذا واجهت اي صعوبه في فهم القصص او السؤال فما عليك الا تسألني لتوضيح ماترغب به.

**السؤال الافتتاحي:**

ماذا يعني لكي التدريس؟ وما هو منظورك للتدريس والتحصيل التعليمي؟ ماهي التعبير المناسب الذي يصف منظورك لهاتين العلمليتين؟

**القصه الاولى:**

حلا معلمة لغة انجليزيه والتي تمتلك فكره معينه بأن الفصل هو محيط للتحصيل العلمي وايضا هو نسخه مصغره للمجتمع. ولهذا هي ترى بان هدف الفصل الدراسي هو لتمكين الطالب لاختبار فهمهم للمواد العليمية وايضا للمشاركه في العمل الجماعي بين الطلبه وايضا مشاركة تحصيلهم العلمي مع زملائهم في الفصل. هي مؤمنة بان الطالب مسؤول عن التحصيل العلمي له وانه عليه فعل كل المهام بدعم قليل جدا من ناحيتها كمعلمه. حلا تجادل بان على الطالب بان يجد طريقة لكي يتعامل مع المشاكل التعليميه ولكي يسهل عليه فهم واستيعاب الدرس. ولهذا هي تعتقد بان دورها الوحيد في الفصل هو دعم الطالب في الإتكال والاعتماد على نفسه في العمليه التعليمية.

**1- كيف ترى نظرة حلا للتدريس؟ يرجى مناقشة الموضوع.**

**القصه الثانية:**

في احدى حلقات النقاش بين المعلمين حول التحصيل العلمي للطلبه في مادة اللغه الانجليزيه, اشتكى أحمد بخصوص المتطلبات الموجوده في المنهج الحديث من حيث استخدام المنهج لخطة العليم الذاتي للطالب بدلا من الطريقة التقليدية المتبعه في المنهج السابق. يقول أحمد " أنه من الصعب جدا للانصياع الى هذه التعليمات الموجوده في المنهج الحديث لانه مختلف تماما عن ما قمنا بتعلمه في المنهج القديم فقد قام المعلم باعطائنا جميع المعلومات التي نحتاجها بدون تعب منا .. فقد ترجم القطع ووضح لنا معاني المفردات وشرح لنا النحو وغيرها من الاشياء التي كانت من مسؤولياته كلها. وكل ماعلينا فعله هو ان نحفظ هذا القواعد والمفردات لكي نمتحن فيها في الامتحانات النهائية. لقد احببت تلك الطريقة في التدريس ولقد تماشت معنا وقد كنا طلبة متفوقين في ذلك الوقت. ولكن اليوم انا أعاني مع استخدام الطرق الحديثه الموجوده في منهجنا اليوم وانا قلق ايضا على نظام الامتحان النهائي والذي يركز على اختبار الطلبه في معلوماتهم النحويه فقط ولن يحتوى الامتحان على النشاطات الاخرى مثل الكتابه والمحادثه والعمل الجماعي".

1- **هل تتفق مع أحمد في رأيه؟**
2- **كيف وجدت استخدام الطرق الحديثه في تدريسك للمنهج؟**

**القصه الثالثة:**

منال وفاطمة (اسماء مستعاره) مدرسة لغة انجليزيه في مدرسه الجلاء الثانوية. في احدى حلقات النقاش التي حدثت بينهما حول هدف تعليم اللغه الانجليزية والتعليم بشكل عام. منال ترى بان الهدف الاساسي للتعليم هو تأسيس قاعدة ثقافيه لانها عامل اساسي لتحضير شباب واعي. منال تقول "انها من مسؤولياتنا تعليم ابنائنا لكي يتعلموا ما وصل اليه العلم الحديث وزرع حب التعلم في انفسهم لكي يعيشوا حياة طبيعيه" . وفي الجهة الاخرى, فاطمة ترى بان الغاية من التعليم هي من ناحية عمليه اكثر من انها علميه. فهي تؤكد دور التعليم في تأمين الشخص لوظيفة تعينه على العيش الكريم وايضا لكي يكتسبوا المرونه في التصرف مع المواقف التي تتطلب وعي كافي للخروج من بعض التحديات.

1- **اي من الرأيين تتفق معه؟ ولماذا؟**

# Appendix D: Interview questions.

1- Can you tell me how you became a teacher?
   - What are the key factors that led to your decision to pursue teaching?
   - Tell me about your teaching experience up to date.

2- Can you tell me your experience of the preparation (e.g. initial teacher education) involved as you entered the teaching profession? In your view, how important is this preparation?
   - Can you tell me your experience of the professional development involved during your teaching career?
   - In your view, how important is professional development?

3- Can you tell me your experience of being introduced to the current curriculum?
   - What do you think of the quantity of training sessions received?
   - What do you think of the quality of training sessions received?
   - What impact did the training sessions make on your practice?
   - Please comment on the timescale involved concerning the training sessions offered to introduce the current curriculum?

4- You have been teaching now for … years and you will have seen changes in learning and teaching in the classroom over this period. Can you talk about what you think the main changes are?
   - The key features of teaching.
   - The classroom environment.
   - Teacher's attitudes to pupils.
   - Pupils' attitudes to teachers.
   - Class size.
   - Furniture facilitates different teaching methods.
   - Classroom layout

5- How do you go about teaching a typical lesson - specify a grade level?
   - General aims and objectives.
   - Current teaching methods – common and alternative methods.
   - Using the teacher's guidebook.
   - Incorporating listening, reading, writing, speaking and group activities.
   - Student participation.
   - Time management.

6- How is student achievement assessed?
   - What is the relationship between the current curriculum and the assessment?
   - How does assessment impact on teaching?
   - How does assessment impact on learning?
   - In your view, how does the current curriculum affect student achievement in language learning? Please support your answer.

7- Can you identify key differences between teaching the old curriculum and the current curriculum?

- Ease of teaching.
- Pupils' attitude to old and new curricula.
- Challenges encountered.
- Positive impact.

8- Can we speak about the social culture in relation to teaching the current curriculum?
   - The impact of religious beliefs of stakeholders (e.g. principals, teachers, parents, students) on teaching and learning.
   - How is the teacher-student's relationship seen by the society as well as the teacher and the student?
   - How does the community view the teacher's and the student's classroom responsibilities?

9- What can you tell me about the academic culture or the school culture?
   - Level of discussion with fellow teachers.
   - Level of collaboration among teachers.
   - The relationship with teachers from different schools.

10- How important do you think education is in general?
   - What is your view of the purpose of teaching and learning?
   - What is your view of the teachers' role(s)?
   - What is your view of the learners' role(s)?

11- Having experienced the implementation of curricular change in the CLT Libyan context, what suggestions would you like to offer with respect to:
   - Teachers' involvement.
   - Policymakers' involvement.
   - Curriculum planners' involvement.

12- How could the present curricular implementation have been made better?
   - How could the present curricular implementation have promoted greater acceptance from the teachers?
   - Teacher's leading role in curriculum change.

# Appendix E: Classroom observation schedule and a sample of classroom observation.

Teacher: Omar

Gender: Male

Date and Time: 22/10/16, 10.30

Subject/unit observed: Unit One: Stories

Observer: Tarig Omar

Observation time length: 45 mins  Number of students: 37

| Review Section | Task commitment | Description/Comments |
|---|---|---|
| 1. **SUBJECT MATTER CONTENT** (shows good command and knowledge of subject matter; demonstrates breadth and depth of mastery) | YES ☒<br>NO ☐<br>Occasionally ☐ | • Teacher has over 30 years of teaching experience. She showed a good knowledge of subject matter. |
| 2. **TEACHING METHODS** (uses relevant teaching methods, aids, materials as intended by the curriculum makers) | YES ☐<br>NO ☒<br>Occasionally ☐ | • No aids were available to the teacher resulting in reversing to her traditional teaching methods.<br>• The Arabic language was used. |
| **3. LESSON INITIATION** (establishes classroom environment conducive to learning; how the lesson is started) | Evident ☒<br>Unnoticeable ☐<br>Occasionally ☐ | • The teacher has a strong personality and approachable.<br>• Students were respectful. Every student sat quietly when the teacher had entered the class.<br>• Blackboard was cleaned by a student.<br>• A students was asked to bring chalk from the in-school supplier. (has a disadvantage on the class allocated time)<br>• The teacher wrote the date and the title on the blackboard.<br>• Lesson was started with hassle free. |

| Review Section | Task commitment | Description/Comments |
|---|---|---|
| **4. PAIR WORK (investigates the conduct of this activity, by whom the activity is led and completed, how students participate and the interactional nature of the pair work activity)** | Yes ☐<br>No ☒<br>Occasionally ☐ | • Pair work was absent in this class. Teacher ended up doing this activity by asking students for answers directly. |
| **5. TEACHING GRAMMAR (explores teachers policy for teaching grammar and whether teachers practices are in line with the curriculum intention)** | Yes ☒<br>No ☐<br>Occasionally ☐ | • Grammar lesson was given as intended by the curriculum. It was similar grammar activity found in the old curriculum. This was the part which I think must of the students liked.<br>• Arabic was the dominant language for this activity. |
| **6. THE LISTENING ACTIVITY (explores how teachers start the listening activity, what aids used, to what extent the teacher is respecting the aims of the listening activity and how the teacher engages students in the activity)** | Yes ☐<br>No ☒<br>Occasionally ☐ | • Was skipped. Will investigate in follow-up interview. |
| **7. THE READING ACTIVITY (explores teachers' practical reactions to the overall aims of the activity outlined in the curriculum, how words meaning are provided what language used to give words meanings, commitment to the beginning and finishing the three reading stages; pre, while and after reading stages)** | Yes ☐<br>No ☒<br>Occasionally ☐ | • No commitment to the various reading stages; pre, while and after reading.<br>• Wrote the first lengthy paragraph on board and started to read and students repeated after her.<br>• Words meaning were give traditionally; English word and its equivalent in Arabic. No English synonym was given.<br>• Exercise (1C) was given as homework instead. Will explore later why.<br>• Arabic was the dominant language for this activity. |
| **8. THE WRITING ACTIVITY (understanding how teachers encourage/motivate their students, how teacher's practice is congruent with the aims intended by the curriculum and what students do in the activity)** | Yes ☐<br>No ☐<br>Occasionally ☒ | • The teacher did the first exercise (7-1-A) she skipped exercise (7-2-B). I will explore in the follow-up interview.<br>• Exercise (7-2-A) was giving as homework instead of doing it in class. I will investigate why this happened.<br>• Arabic is used. |

| Review Section | Task commitment | Description/Comments |
|---|---|---|
| **9. THE SPEAKING ACTIVITY (explores what language used, how the teacher explain the activity to students, students active participation and the completion of the activity by bother the teacher and students)** | Yes ☐<br>No ☐<br>Occasionally ☒ | • The teacher explained the task in Arabic.<br>• The teacher did the most of the speaking.<br>• Task (6A,B,C) were done by students.<br>• Very few students joined the teacher in exercise (6-2-A and B). Will ask her later why.<br>• Arabic as instruction mean. |
| **10. OTHER EMERGING THEMES (Themes that might arise from certain practices are added here)**<br>• **----------Cold class ----------**<br>• **-------students went to toilets ---------- ------**<br>• **---interruption made by other students from other classes----**<br>• **---broken windows----------**<br>• **----------**<br>• **----------** | | |

# Appendix F: Follow-up interview questions.

**Tarig** --- In your class I noticed that you didn't use the teaching methods recommended by the new curriculum, why didn't you use the new method?

**Omar** --- The new teaching methods requires a lot of things before we can use it. There is speaking writing and listening task that we need preparation for them, we need good classroom and we need good desks. How can someone use the new teaching methods when all important materials are absent? The school I work in has nothing. You can ask the headteacher why they don't provide us the tools and facilities needed for the new teaching methods.

**Tarig** --- ok, perhaps I will speak to the head teacher about this. Let's speak about the lesson that you taught. The first thing I noticed was that you asked a student to bring chalk from the in-school stationary supplier. Do you think that this can take from your class time?

**Omar** – Yes that is true. The school must employ some people to make classroom ready for every class. I have to clean the board every time I start my class and ask a student to bring a new chalk. It is not my fault.

**Tarig** --- I noticed that there was not a pair work task and you just asked students the questions in that task. Why did you do that way?

**Omar** --- Ok I did that way because I know my students. They can't do it by themselves, but let's assume that they can. The classroom layout is not suitable for such activity at all. The desks are very old and are arranged in the traditional way, arranged in rows. We need some round tables so they can face one another and can discuss questions.

**Tarig** --- Although you taught grammar as intended by the task, you used Arabic a lot. Can you please tell me why?

**Omar** – Yes, they can't understand me when I speak English because their English is not best.

**Tarig** --- Ok what about the listening activity. I noticed that you skipped it. Why didn't you do the listening task?

**Omar** --- Because I don't have listening lab for them. The listening needs a suitable place and extra time for it to be given successfully. We don't have CD players either. It is very difficult to do the listening activity. Also, I can't be sure that my students will like it. Also, we don't test listening in the final examination. just reading and grammar.

**Tarig** – Ok let's move to the reading activity. In the student book there is a pre-reading stage that the students need to complete before they can begin the actual reading, but I didn't see you do that activity. Why didn't you do it?

**Omar**--- They won't be able to do it because I know them well. They would just stay calm and wait for me do the activity and ask questions.

**Tarig** --- You also wrote the first paragraph of the reading passing on the board. Do you think that can work for your students, and why did you do that?

**Omar** --- I did that because they can't follow me when I read directly from the book. Also, when I write the passage on the board, I can see who is following and who is not. There are lazy students who pretend that they are following when they are not when I read directly from their book.

**Tarig** – You translated every new word for them and you didn't allow them to guess the meaning for the new words by themselves. Why was that?

**Omar** --- They want it that way. I wish that they can do that on their own, but their thinking level is not good. They are dependent on me at all times…

**Tarig** --- I noticed that words meaning were given in Arabic. Why did you try to give them in English instead?

**Omar** --- That will not work. That will make the learning situation even worse. If I give the meaning in English they will not understand it. This is an advanced level that my students haven't yet reached.

**Tarig** --- What about exercise 1-C. I noticed that you gave it as a home work whereas it was an in-class activity. Why did you give it as a homework?

**Omar** --- It is because the time limit. I don't have enough time.

**Tarig** --- And do you think that they will do the task at home? Because this require writing instead of discussion.

**Omar** --- Well, sometimes they do it and sometimes they don't, but the majority do it. And yes it is writing task you can say.

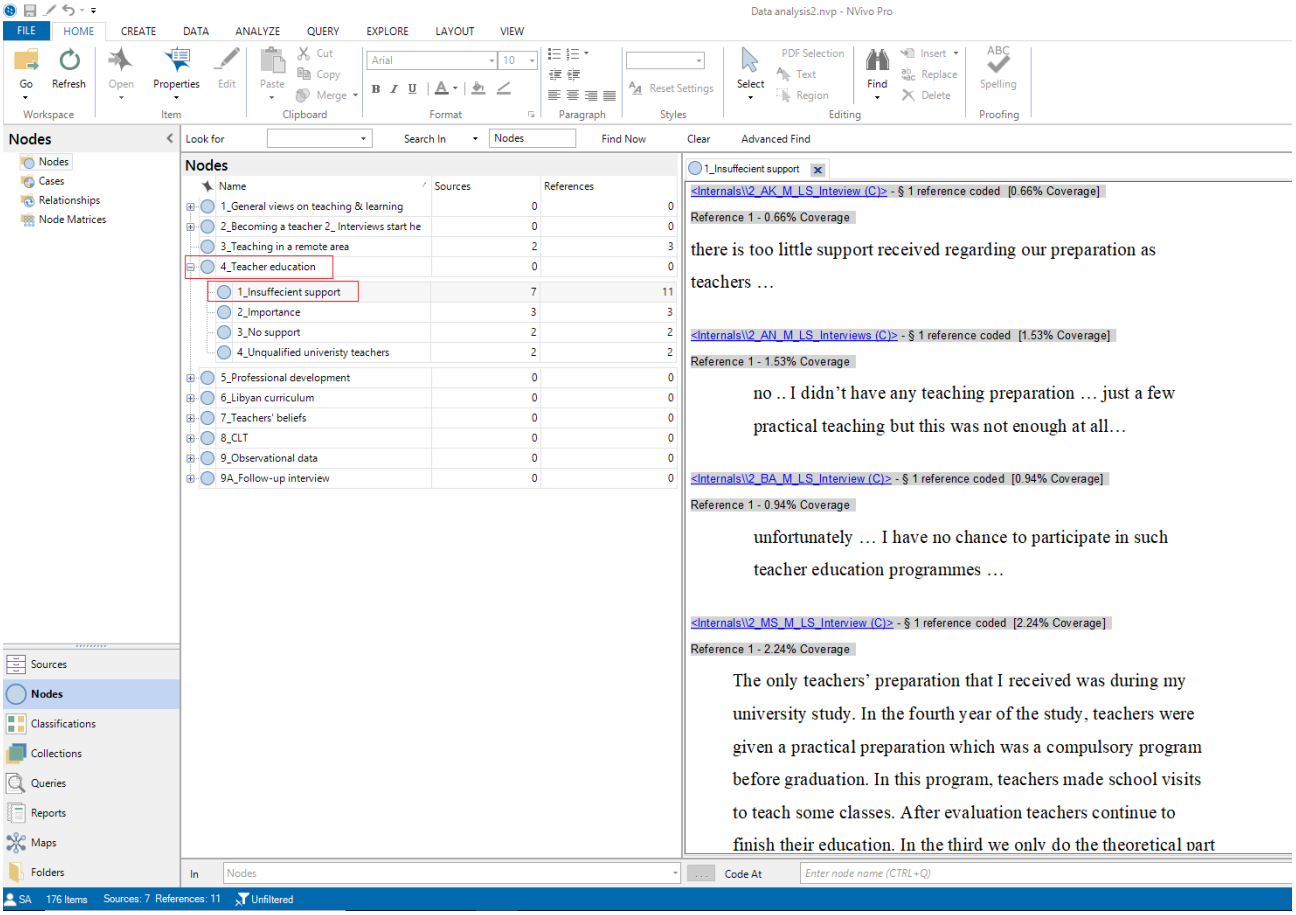
**Tarig** --- ok let's talk about the writing task now. I noticed that you gave the task 7-1-A and you skipped task 7-2-B. Why was that? Also 7-2-A was given as a homework.

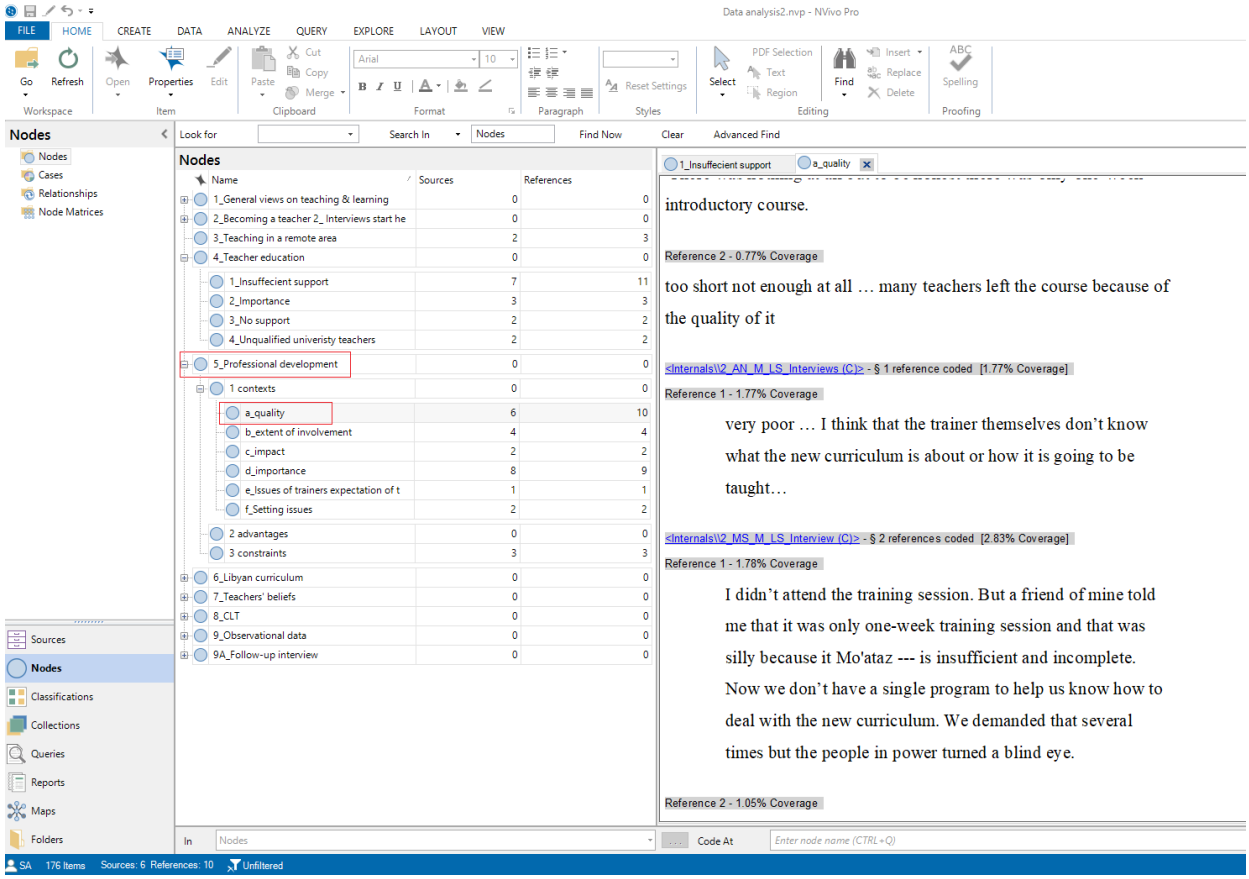
**Omar** – the first task is simple because it is not a writing task actually. It is a putting in order certain phrases. They can do this with some mistakes. The second exercise is difficult for them and it takes time to explain and I don't have enough time to cover it all. I gave the other exercise as a homework because as I said I have not time to do it.

**Tarig** --- That makes sense. Ok now the speaking task, I could see some good work done by the students regarding tasks 6-A,B and C, but why didn't they do good at task 6-2-A and B?

**Omar** --- Yes that exercise needed pair work, and they don't like pair work and they don't want to speak to each other in a group of two because of their speaking ability which is not good enough.

# Appendix G: Examples themes derived from coding the vignettes, the two interviews and the classroom observations.

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Relationships
Node Matrices
Look for
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Nodes
Find Now
Clear
Advanced Find
Nodes
Name
Sources
References
1_General views on teaching & learning 0 0
2_Becoming a teacher 2_ Interviews start he 0 0
3_Teaching in a remote area 2 3
4_Teacher education 0 0
1_Insuffecient support 7 11
2_Importance 3 3
3_No support 2 2
4_Unqualified univeristy teachers 2 2
5_Professional development 0 0
1 contexts 0 0
a_quality 6 10
b_extent of involvement 4 4
c_impact 2 2
d_importance 8 9
e_Issues of trainers expectation of t 1 1
f_Setting issues 2 2
2 advantages 0 0
3 constraints 3 3
6_Libyan curriculum 0 0
7_Teachers' beliefs 0 0
8_CLT 0 0
9_Observational data 0 0
9A_Follow-up interview 0 0
1_Insuffecient support
a_quality
introductory course.
Reference 2 - 0.77% Coverage
too short not enough at all … many teachers left the course because of the quality of it
<Internals\\2_AN_M_LS_Interviews (C)> - § 1 reference coded [1.77% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 1.77% Coverage
very poor … I think that the trainer themselves don't know what the new curriculum is about or how it is going to be taught…
<Internals\\2_MS_M_LS_Interview (C)> - § 2 references coded [2.83% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 1.78% Coverage
I didn't attend the training session. But a friend of mine told me that it was only one-week training session and that was silly because it Mo'ataz --- is insufficient and incomplete. Now we don't have a single program to help us know how to deal with the new curriculum. We demanded that several times but the people in power turned a blind eye.
Reference 2 - 1.05% Coverage
Sources
Nodes
Classifications
Collections
Queries
Reports
Maps
Folders
In
Nodes
Code At
Enter node name (CTRL+Q)
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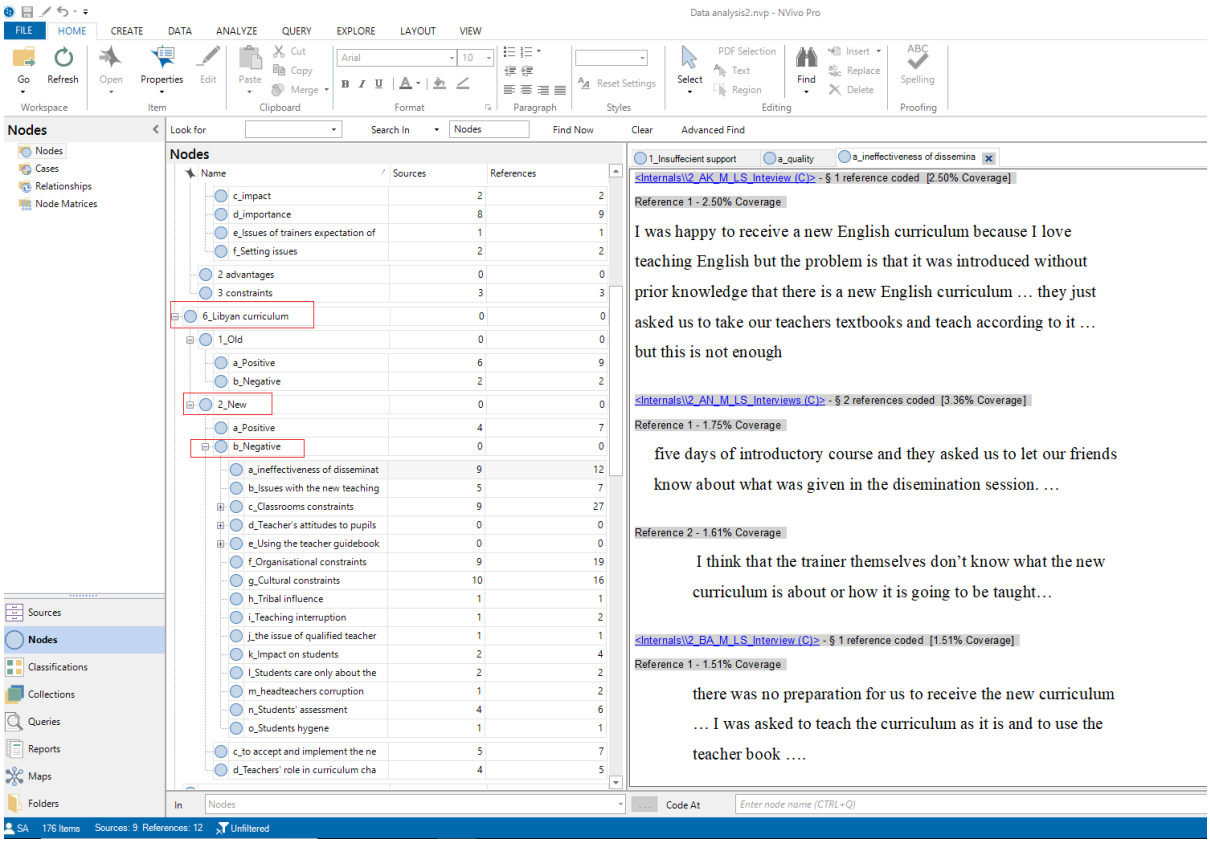
176 Items
Sources: 6 References: 10
Unfiltered


Data analysis2.nvp - NVivo Pro
Nodes
Name
Sources
References
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d_importance 8 9
e_Issues of trainers expectation of 1 1
f_Setting issues 2 2
2 advantages 0 0
3 constraints 3 3
6_Libyan curriculum 0 0
1_Old 0 0
a_Positive 6 9
b_Negative 2 2
2_New 0 0
a_Positive 4 7
b_Negative 0 0
a_ineffectiveness of disseminat 9 12
b_Issues with the new teaching 5 7
c_Classrooms constraints 9 27
d_Teacher's attitudes to pupils 0 0
e_Using the teacher guidebook 0 0
f_Organisational constraints 9 19
g_Cultural constraints 10 16
h_Tribal influence 1 1
i_Teaching interruption 1 2
j_the issue of qualified teacher 1 1
k_Impact on students 2 4
l_Students care only about the 2 2
m_headteachers corruption 1 2
n_Students' assessment 4 6
o_Students hygene 1 1
c_to accept and implement the ne 5 7
d_Teachers' role in curriculum cha 4 5
<Internals\\2_AK_M_LS_Inteview (C)> - § 1 reference coded [2.50% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 2.50% Coverage
I was happy to receive a new English curriculum because I love teaching English but the problem is that it was introduced without prior knowledge that there is a new English curriculum … they just asked us to take our teachers textbooks and teach according to it … but this is not enough
<Internals\\2_AN_M_LS_Interviews (C)> - § 2 references coded [3.36% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 1.75% Coverage
five days of introductory course and they asked us to let our friends know about what was given in the disemination session. …
Reference 2 - 1.61% Coverage
I think that the trainer themselves don't know what the new curriculum is about or how it is going to be taught…
<Internals\\2_BA_M_LS_Interview (C)> - § 1 reference coded [1.51% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 1.51% Coverage
there was no preparation for us to receive the new curriculum … I was asked to teach the curriculum as it is and to use the teacher book ….

# Appendix F: Plain language statement

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

## Participant Information Sheet

**Title of project and researcher details**

From Curriculum Reform to Classroom Practice: Intentions, Perceptions and Actual Implementation in English Secondary Schools in Libya

Researcher: Mr Tarig Omar

Supervisor: Dr Dely Elliot and Dr Margaret McCulloch

Programme: PhD

You are being invited to take part in a research project into the perceptions and actual implementation of the modern English curriculum in Libya. This is part of my work towards gaining a PhD degree at the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom.

Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the information on this page carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**What the project will involve**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how teachers perceive and are implementing the current English language curriculum in Libya. I hope to explore teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching and how these may affect teachers' implementation of the reform. In addition, the study will explore the particular factors which may either hinder or foster successful uptake of the reform. I hope to have completed my data collection by the end of September 2016.

You are being asked to take part because you have significant experience in teaching both the recent English language curriculum and the old curriculum. If you decide to take part, I would arrange to interview you and then observe you teaching a lesson and then re-interview you to discuss some points in relation to your teaching. The first interview will last about 45 minutes and will be arranged at a time that suits you, on school premises. The second

interview will last approximately 40-45 minutes; both interviews will be audio-recorded. A transcript will be returned to you for checking before I use it in my analysis.

Taking part in this project is entirely voluntary. Should you decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

**Keeping information confidential**

All data will be stored in a locked cabinet or in a locked file on my computer and will be dealt with confidentially*. It will only be seen by myself and my supervisors. Neither you nor your place of work will be identified by name in any assignment or publication arising from the project. Participants may be referred to by a pseudonym. All personal data, both electronic and/or paper copies will be destroyed when the project is complete. Anonymised research data will be kept for up to 10 years, in line with university policy, and may be used by other genuine researchers.

The research is funded by the Higher Ministry of Education in Libya (HMoE); this body is **only** responsible for funding the research and there is no link between the HMoE and participants or their employers. This research is being carried out independently and taking part in this research should have no negative impact on participants' careers or employment.

You should be aware that although I will take all the steps that I can to ensure that you are not identifiable in the report, it is impossible to guarantee total confidentiality since the area in which the research is taking place is geographically quite small.

**The results of this study**

I will present my findings in the dissertation that I am writing for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I may also present these at education conferences, and use the information to write a journal article. I will provide a written summary of my findings for all participants and can come back to your school to discuss this with you, if you wish. You may request a copy of the dissertation in due course.

**Review of the study design**

This study has been reviewed and agreed by the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow.

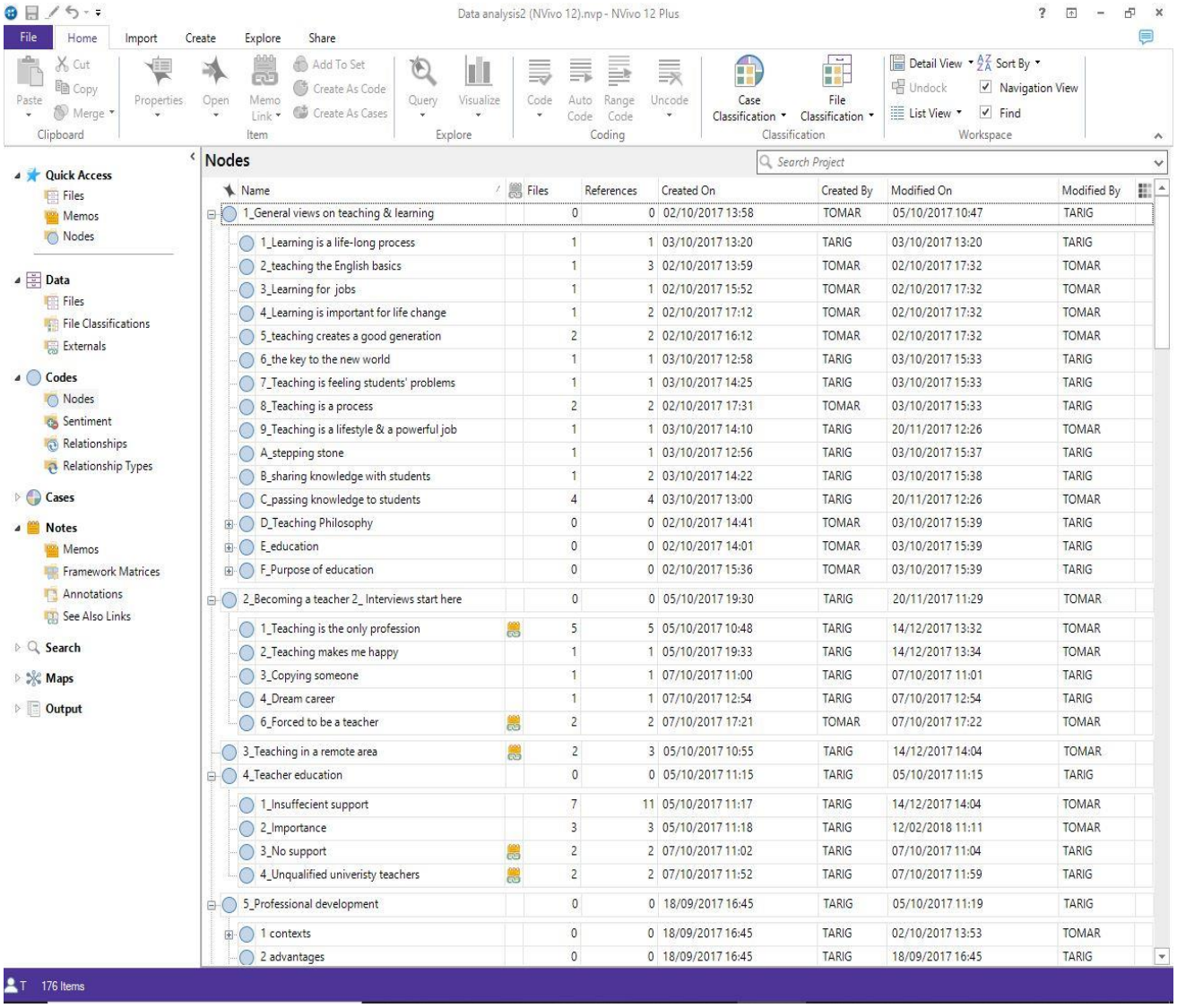
**Contacts for further Information**

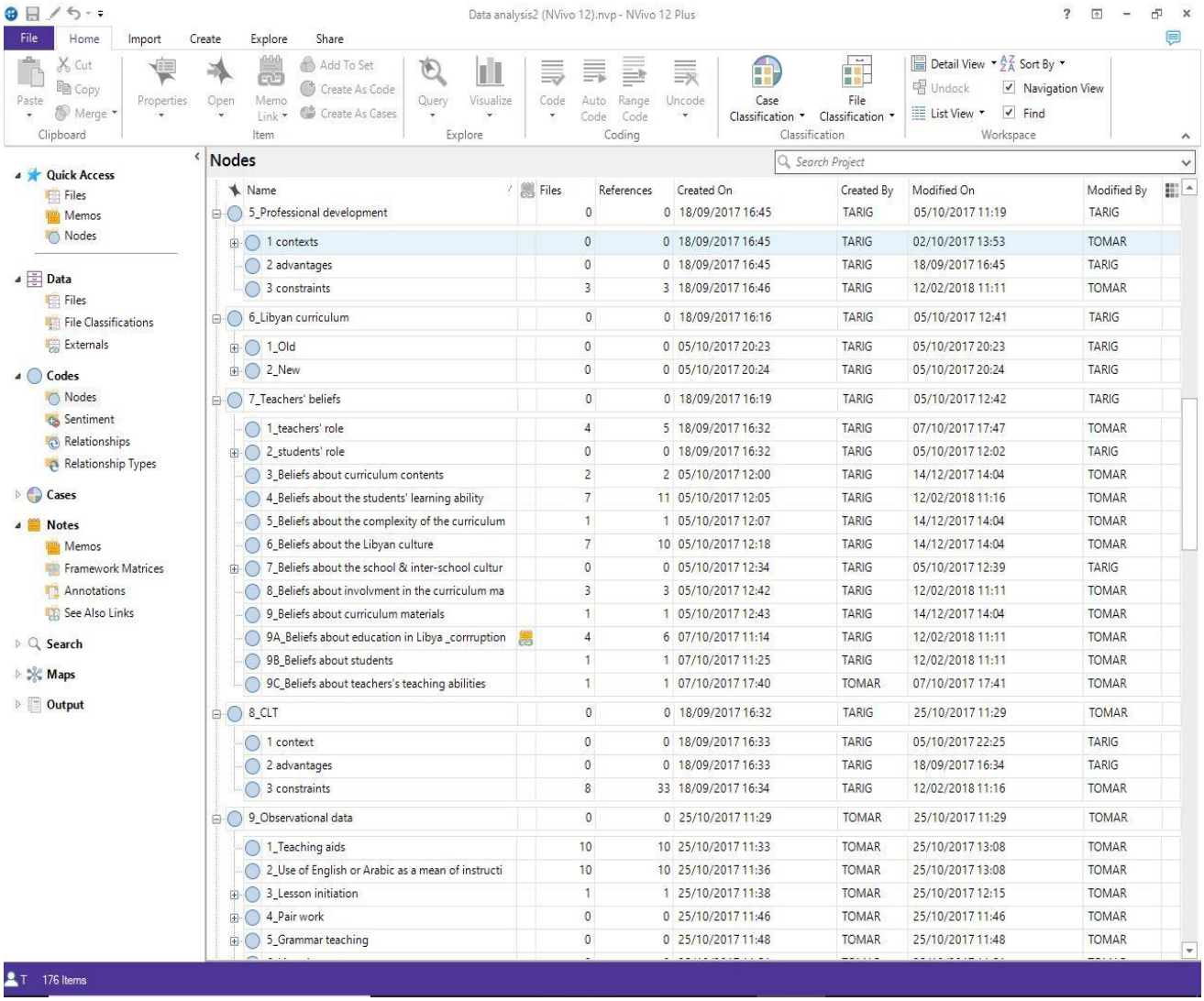
If you have any questions about this study, you can ask me, Mr Tarig (t.omar.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

Thank you for reading this.

**Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. If this was the case we would inform you of any decisions that might limit confidentiality.*

# Appendix G: Examples of NVivo nodes used in data analysis

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Paste
Cut
Copy
Merge
Clipboard
Properties
Open
Memo Link
Add To Set
Create As Code
Create As Cases
Item
Query
Visualize
Explore
Code
Auto Code
Range Code
Uncode
Coding
Case Classification
File Classification
Classification
Detail View
Sort By
Undock
Navigation View
List View
Find
Workspace
Quick Access
Files
Memos
Nodes
Data
Files
File Classifications
Externals
Codes
Nodes
Sentiment
Relationships
Relationship Types
Cases
Notes
Memos
Framework Matrices
Annotations
See Also Links
Search
Maps
Output
Nodes
Search Project
Name
Files
References
Created On
Created By
Modified On
Modified By
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1 contexts 0 0 18/09/2017 16:45 TARIG 02/10/2017 13:53 TOMAR
2 advantages 0 0 18/09/2017 16:45 TARIG 18/09/2017 16:45 TARIG
3 constraints 3 3 18/09/2017 16:46 TARIG 12/02/2018 11:11 TOMAR
6_Libyan curriculum 0 0 18/09/2017 16:16 TARIG 05/10/2017 12:41 TARIG
1_Old 0 0 05/10/2017 20:23 TARIG 05/10/2017 20:23 TARIG
2_New 0 0 05/10/2017 20:24 TARIG 05/10/2017 20:24 TARIG
7_Teachers' beliefs 0 0 18/09/2017 16:19 TARIG 05/10/2017 12:42 TARIG
1_teachers' role 4 5 18/09/2017 16:32 TARIG 07/10/2017 17:47 TOMAR
2_students' role 0 0 18/09/2017 16:32 TARIG 05/10/2017 12:02 TARIG
3_Beliefs about curriculum contents 2 2 05/10/2017 12:00 TARIG 14/12/2017 14:04 TOMAR
4_Beliefs about the students' learning ability 7 11 05/10/2017 12:05 TARIG 12/02/2018 11:16 TOMAR
5_Beliefs about the complexity of the curriculum 1 1 05/10/2017 12:07 TARIG 14/12/2017 14:04 TOMAR
6_Beliefs about the Libyan culture 7 10 05/10/2017 12:18 TARIG 14/12/2017 14:04 TOMAR
7_Beliefs about the school & inter-school cultur 0 0 05/10/2017 12:34 TARIG 05/10/2017 12:39 TARIG
8_Beliefs about involvment in the curriculum ma 3 3 05/10/2017 12:42 TARIG 12/02/2018 11:11 TOMAR
9_Beliefs about curriculum materials 1 1 05/10/2017 12:43 TARIG 14/12/2017 14:04 TOMAR
9A_Beliefs about education in Libya _corruption 4 6 07/10/2017 11:14 TARIG 12/02/2018 11:11 TOMAR
9B_Beliefs about students 1 1 07/10/2017 11:25 TARIG 12/02/2018 11:11 TOMAR
9C_Beliefs about teachers's teaching abilities 1 1 07/10/2017 17:40 TOMAR 07/10/2017 17:41 TOMAR
8_CLT 0 0 18/09/2017 16:32 TARIG 25/10/2017 11:29 TOMAR
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2 advantages 0 0 18/09/2017 16:33 TARIG 18/09/2017 16:34 TARIG
3 constraints 8 33 18/09/2017 16:34 TARIG 12/02/2018 11:16 TOMAR
9_Observational data 0 0 25/10/2017 11:29 TOMAR 25/10/2017 11:29 TOMAR
1_Teaching aids 10 10 25/10/2017 11:33 TOMAR 25/10/2017 13:08 TOMAR
2_Use of English or Arabic as a mean of instructi 10 10 25/10/2017 11:36 TOMAR 25/10/2017 13:08 TOMAR
3_Lesson initiation 1 1 25/10/2017 11:38 TOMAR 25/10/2017 12:15 TOMAR
4_Pair work 0 0 25/10/2017 11:46 TOMAR 25/10/2017 11:46 TOMAR
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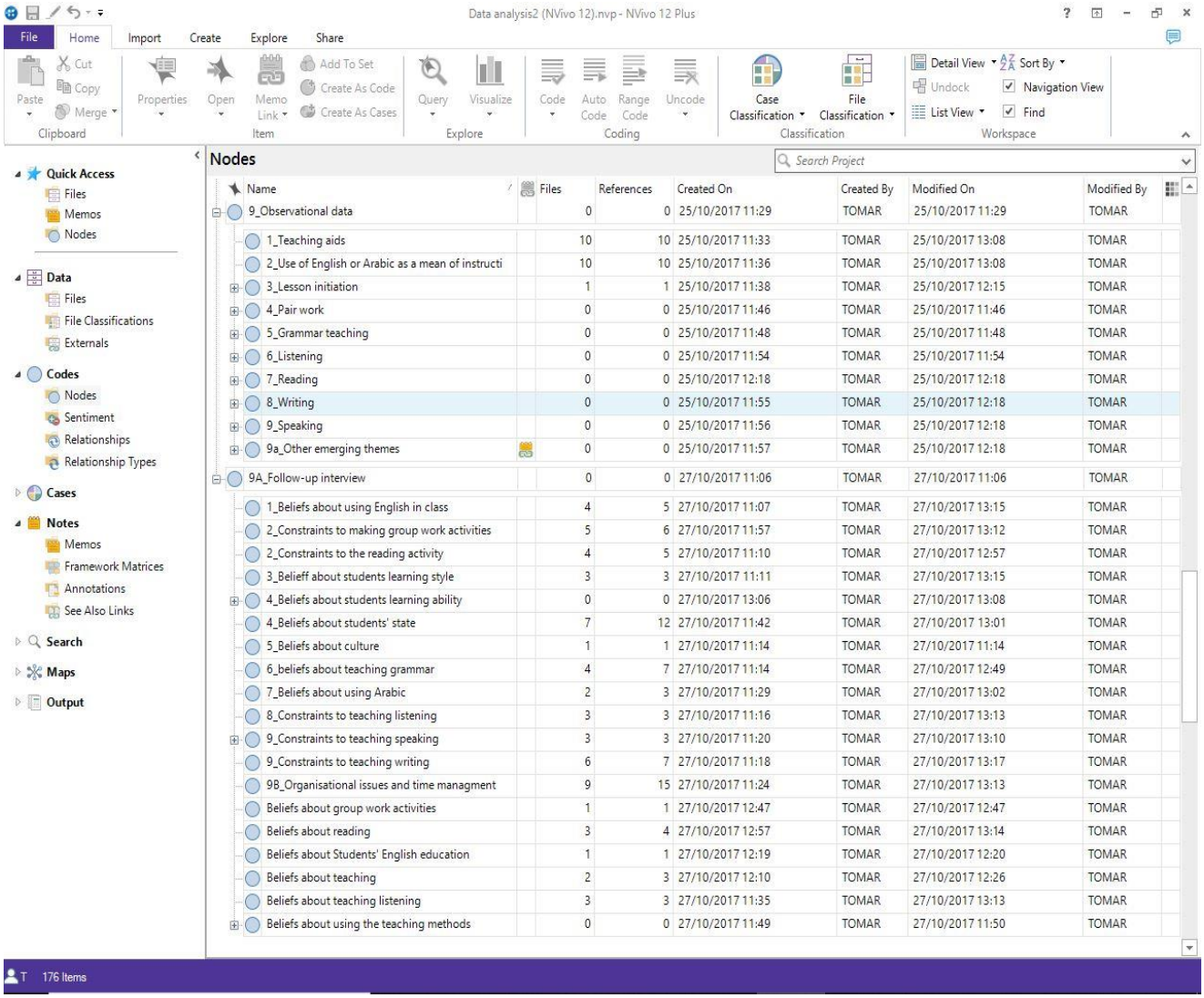
176 Items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Paste
Cut
Copy
Merge
Clipboard
Properties
Open
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Add To Set
Create As Code
Create As Cases
Item
Query
Visualize
Explore
Code
Auto Code
Range Code
Uncode
Coding
Case Classification
File Classification
Classification
Detail View
Sort By
Undock
Navigation View
List View
Find
Workspace
Quick Access
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Memos
Nodes
Data
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File Classifications
Externals
Codes
Nodes
Sentiment
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Relationship Types
Cases
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9_Observational data 0 0 25/10/2017 11:29 TOMAR 25/10/2017 11:29 TOMAR
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2_Use of English or Arabic as a mean of instructi 10 10 25/10/2017 11:36 TOMAR 25/10/2017 13:08 TOMAR
3_Lesson initiation 1 1 25/10/2017 11:38 TOMAR 25/10/2017 12:15 TOMAR
4_Pair work 0 0 25/10/2017 11:46 TOMAR 25/10/2017 11:46 TOMAR
5_Grammar teaching 0 0 25/10/2017 11:48 TOMAR 25/10/2017 11:48 TOMAR
6_Listening 0 0 25/10/2017 11:54 TOMAR 25/10/2017 11:54 TOMAR
7_Reading 0 0 25/10/2017 12:18 TOMAR 25/10/2017 12:18 TOMAR
8_Writing 0 0 25/10/2017 11:55 TOMAR 25/10/2017 12:18 TOMAR
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2_Constraints to the reading activity 4 5 27/10/2017 11:10 TOMAR 27/10/2017 12:57 TOMAR
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176 Items